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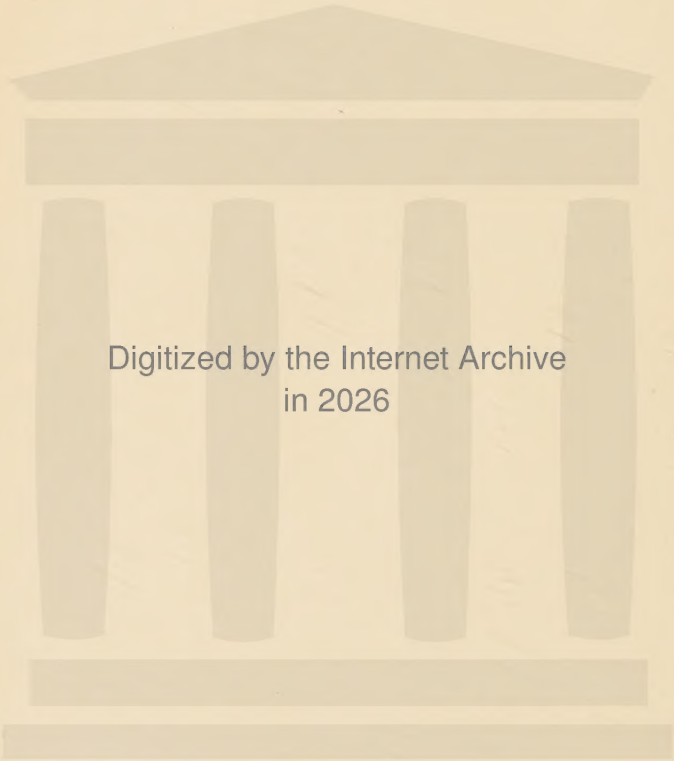

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JOSEPH ENTANGLED

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY

HENRY ARTHUR JONES

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The following is a copy of the playbill of the first performance of "Joseph Entangled," at the Haymarket Theatre, London :

TO-NIGHT, TUESDAY, JANUARY 19TH, 1904, AT 8.45 O'CLOCK

will be produced for the first time

A NEW COMEDY IN THREE ACTS, CALLED

JOSEPH ENTANGLED

By HENRY ARTHUR JONES

SIR JOSEH LACY .....Mr. Cyril Maude.
HARDOLPH MAYNE Lady Verona's Husband).....Mr. Herbert Waring.
HARRY TAVENDER.....Mr. Sam Sothern.
GERALD FANMERE (Lady Joyce's Husband).....Mr. Kenneth Douglas.
JERMYN PYECROFT.....Mr. Charles Sugden.
PROFESSOR TOFIELD (Jobsonian Professor of Moral Philosophy).....Mr. Edmund Maurice.
KNAPMAN.....Mr. Frederic Volpé.
STADDON.....Mr. Rudge Harding.
FOOTMAN.....Mr. A. G. Onslow.
LADY VERONA MAYNE.....Miss Ellis Jeffreys.
LADY JOYCE FANMERE (her Sister)..Miss Winifred Arthur-Jones.
MRS. HARRY TAVENDER.....Miss Beatrice Ferrar.
MRS. KNAPMAN.....Mrs. Charles Calvert.

J 71
J 77

The first performance in America was given at the Columbia Theatre, San Francisco, Cal., on August 8, 1904.

A New Comedy in Three Acts
entitled

JOSEPH ENTANGLED

BY

HENRY ARTHUR JONES

Sir Joseph Lacy	Mr. Henry Miller.
Hardolph Mayne	Mr. John Glendeinning.
Professor Tofield	Mr. Walter Allen.
Jermyn Pyecroft	Mr. Stanley Dark.
Harry Tavender	Mr. Frederick Tieden.
Gerald Fanmere	Mr. J. Hartley Manners.
Knapman	Mr. Fred. Tyler.
Staddon	Mr. Bertram Harrison.
Footman	Mr. Frank Willard.
Lady Verona Mayne	Miss Hilda Spong.
Lady Joyce Fanmere	Miss Grace Heyer.
Mrs. Harry Tavender	Miss Jessie Busley.
Mrs. Knapman	Mrs. Maggie Hollaway Fisher.

23850

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

SIR JOSEPH LACY.
HARDOLPH MAYNE, Lady Verona's husband.
HARRY TAVENDER.
GERALD FANMERE, Lady Joyce's husband.
JERMYN PYECROFT.
PROFESSOR TOFIELD, Jobsonian Professor of Moral Philosophy.
KNAPMAN.
STADDON.
FOOTMAN.

LADY VERONA MAYNE.
LADY JOYCE FANMERE, Lady Verona's sister.
MRS. HARRY TAVENDER.
MRS. KNAPMAN.

The action takes place in London at the present time.

ACT I.

SCENE 1: THE MORNING-ROOM AT MR. HARDOLPH MAYNE'S, SAVILLE STREET, PICCADILLY.

Time : Ten o'clock on an evening in August.

SCENE 2: THE SAME.

Time : The next morning.

ACT II.

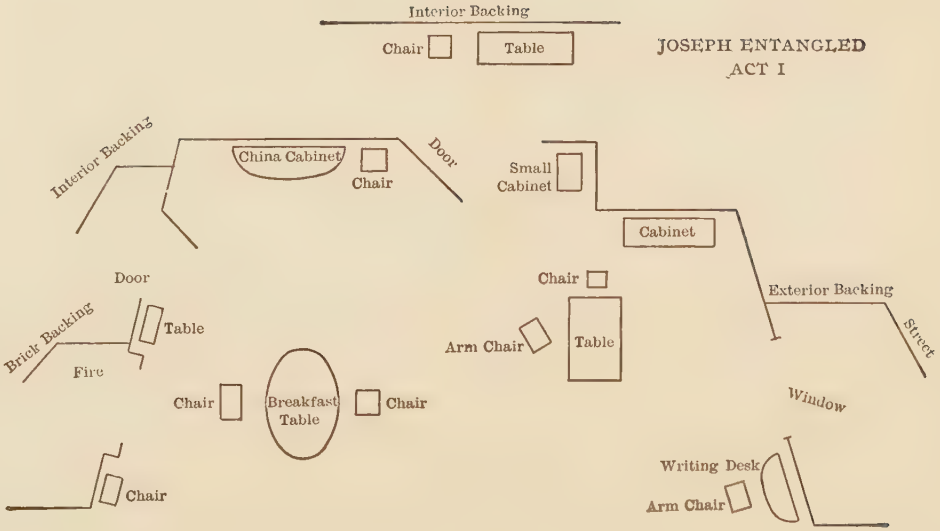
SCENE: SIR JOSEPH'S CHAMBERS, OVERLOOKING THE GREEN PARK.

Time : An afternoon in the following October.

ACT III.

SCENE: THE BACK DRAWING-ROOM AT MR. HARDOLPH MAYNE'S.

Time : The same afternoon.


Interior Backing
Chair
Table
JOSEPH ENTANGLED
ACT I
Interior Backing
China Cabinet
Chair
Door
Small Cabinet
Cabinet
Door
Brick Backing
Table
Fire
Chair
Arm Chair
Table
Exterior Backing
Street
Chair
Breakfast Table
Chair
Window
Chair
Writing Desk
Arm Chair

ACT I.

SCENE I. *The morning-room at* MR. HARDOLPH MAYNE'S, *Saville Street, Piccadilly. A small front room on the ground floor in a London mansion. A door at back leading into hall. A door right. A window, left, looking out upon a fashionable West End street. A table up stage, left, with chairs on each side. An oval table down stage, right. A table with writing materials down stage, left, below window. A handsome cabinet at back to right of door. A clock on the mantel-shelf. The room is bright, cosy, and furnished with taste; but there are evidences that the family is out of town. There is a general air of untidiness, betokening a month's absence of the housemaid. Several articles of wearing-apparel belonging to* MR. *and* MRS. KNAPMAN *are scattered about the room, a bonnet, shawl, trousers, slippers, etc. The table, left, is laid for two in a slovenly way, and with a dirty tablecloth. A supper of cold ham, with bread, and beer has just been eaten, and its remains are apparent. The window is thrown open at the bottom and the blind is up. The time is ten o'clock, on an evening in late August when nobody is in town.*

Discover at the table left, KNAPMAN *and* MRS. KNAPMAN. KNAPMAN *is a portly butler about fifty, in his shirt-sleeves, and with his tie*

loosened; his coat is hanging on a chair. MRS. KNAPMAN *is a housekeeper of about the same age; she is quietly dressed after the manner of her class. As the curtain rises* MRS. KNAPMAN *is draining the remains of her beer from her tankard.* KNAPMAN, *having just finished his, stretches out his legs and arms, and yawns.*

KNAPMAN. [*Taking out his watch.*]

[1] *Rises, takes his coat from chair* L., *puts it on.*

Five minutes to ten![1] What a demoralizing hole London is out of the season.

MRS. K. [*Severely.*]

Yes—for them as will demoralize themselves.

KNAP.

[2] *Goes up* C. *gets his hat from chair and opens door.*

Meaning me, Eliza?[2]

MRS. K.

If the cap fits, you can put it on.

KNAP. [*Good-humouredly.*]

Very well, I will. Having no better occupation for my mind, Eliza, I'm going to demoralize myself for a quarter of an hour at the "Lord Palmerston."[3]

[3] *Filling his pipe.*

MRS. K.

[4] *Rises and collects dirty plates.*

A quarter of an hour! Well, I'm going to bed.[4]

KNAP.

[5] *Going out.*

I offer no objection; I've got the master's latch-key.[5]

MRS. K.

If you're late, and especially if you're anyways "on," you'd better go up to the top attic and turn in there. The bed is made.

KNAP.

Very well;[1] you go and take your peaceful slumbers. I won't disturb you. Good-night, Eliza.

[*Exit.*[2] *The front door is heard to shut behind him.* MRS. KNAPMAN[3] *rises and begins to clear away the supper things.*]

A knock at the front door, followed by a ring which is heard as if from downstairs.[4] MRS. KNAPMAN *is arrested in the act of putting away the supper things; shows surprise; the knock and ring are repeated;* MRS. KNAPMAN *comes from cabinet; goes to window and looks out.*

MRS. K. [*Looking out, surprised.*]

My lady!

LADY V. [*Voice outside.*]

Yes, let us in at once.

MRS. K.

Yes, my lady!

[*Comes from window, goes off door at back; is heard to open a door in passage.*

A few seconds later enter[5] LADY VERONA MAYNE and LADY JOYCE FANMERE, *followed by* MRS. KNAPMAN.[6] LADY VERONA *is about thirty;* LADY JOYCE *is her younger sister. They are both in travelling dresses, with summer dust-coats over them. They give evidences of travel and fatigue, of past excitement, and a little present ill-humour.*

MRS. K. [*Having followed them in.*]

Oh, my lady, if we'd had any idea you were coming up, you wouldn't have found the place like this——

[1] *Lighting his pipe.*

[2] *At back.*

[3] *The clock on mantel piece strikes "Ten." When the latter has struck "3 times" a clock is heard to chime at back of stage—4 quarters and "Ten." When the 2nd chime has begun, a big bell under stage strikes "Ten."*

[4] *Knock heard off* L. *and ring* R.

[5] *At back.*

[6] *Mrs. Knapman closes the door and stands* C. *Lady V. goes down* R. *and Lady J. sits* R *of table* L.

LADY V.

Never mind, I'm going to sleep here to-night——

MRS. K.

Yes, my lady. And Lady Joyce?

LADY J.

No.

LADY V.

I suppose my room is ready? [0]

[0] *Taking off her gloves.*

MRS. K.

It could be got ready in a few minutes.[1] [*She is stealthily collecting the articles of wearing-apparel belonging to* KNAPMAN *and herself.*] Mr. Mayne's room is quite in order——[2]

[1] *Mrs. K. snatches the shawl from back of Lady Joyce's chair.*

[2] *Mrs K. steals up to cabinet, takes up her bonnet, which is on chair by cabinet, stands with her hands behind her having the bonnet and shawl.*

LADY V.

I prefer to sleep in my own. Go and prepare it, and look out everything that I shall want for the night.

MRS. K.[3]

[3] *Comes* C.

Yes my lady. I daresay my lady you're surprised to find us up here in the morning-room.

LADY V. [*Sniffing* KNAPMAN'S *tobacco.*]

I certainly expected you to keep to your own apartments.

MRS. K.

Yes, my lady, and in the natural course of things we should; but what with this dreadful weather—and we did fancy there was microbes downstairs—so we took the liberty of——

LADY V.

[6] *Crosses to* R. C.

[5] *Sits down.*

Yes, yes, very well, I'm tired.[4] Please get my room ready at once.[5]

MRS. K.[1]

Yes, my lady.[2] [*Exit.*[3]

LADY VERONA *and* LADY JOYCE *sit looking at each other.*

LADY V. [*Shaking her head severely at* LADY JOYCE.]

Oh, you foolish, foolish creature! If I hadn't rushed up to town and stopped you, where would you have been at this moment?

LADY J.

I suppose I should have been crossing the Channel with Colonel Tyack—[*Looks at clock*] no, we shouldn't have reached Dover.

LADY V.

You seem to take it very coolly——

LADY J.

My dear, I'm just done! I simply haven't the power to feel anything—not even what a donkey I've been.

LADY V.[4]

Joyce, darling, you're sure——

LADY J.

Yes, dear, quite! You believe me?

LADY V. [*Looks searchingly at her.*]

Yes, dear. [*Kisses her.*] But how could you have been so mad?[5] I thought you were very happy with Fanny.

LADY J.

So I am! Poor old Fanny! I'm devoted to him.

[1] L. *of table* R.

[2] *Goes to door* R. *on turning she suddenly catches sight of Knapman's trousers which are over the back of chair* R., *she steals down to chair, snatches up the trousers and exits at door* R.

[3] *Right.*

[4] *Rises and goes to Joyce, taking her hand.*

[5] *Crosses to window* L.

LADY V.

Then why were you going to run away with Colonel Tyack?

LADY J.

I'm sure I don't know. An uncontrollable impulse. What made Lady Fibury steal all those silk blouses from Marshall and Snellgrove's? She has ten thousand a year. But she suddenly saw all the pretty things in front of her and she couldn't resist——

LADY V.

That was kleptomania.

LADY J.

Well so was mine—a sort of kleptomania.

LADY V.

You suddenly saw Colonel Tyack—you don't call him pretty!

LADY J.

No, but he has style, and a way of commanding—Oh, I hate him! [LADY VERONA *looks surprised.*] I do really hate him.

LADY V.

And yet you were——

LADY J. [*Irritated.*] [1]

Oh, Vee, please don't go on about it any more. You forget you once planned to run away with Jo Lacy.

LADY V.

That was before I was married. We were both free, and we both loved each other——

LADY J.

Then why didn't you go on with it?

LADY V.

I heard such dreadful tales about Jo—and I funked it at the last moment. Poor Jo, I'm afraid I treated him very badly! But—he soon got over it and—[*sighs deeply*] I daresay I'm much happier with Hardolph—at least, I'm much safer.[1] Now, dear, we're not going to have any more attacks of this—this matrimonial kleptomania?

[1] *Goes to front of table* L.

LADY J.

No! Of course not. Colonel Tyack will be in Egypt, and my dear old Fanny will be back to-night to take care of me. Ah!

LADY V.

What's the matter?

LADY J.

Fanny wrote me to go to Thurston's hotel and take our usual rooms and wait there for him. His train is due at eleven.

LADY V.

Hadn't I better come with you?

LADY J.

No. He'd wonder why you were up in town.[2] I'll get a cab at the corner. Don't worry about me any more. I'm quite safe. [*Very heartily.*] Bless you, dear! It was good of you to rush up and save me. Good-night, old girl. [*A very hearty caress.*

[2] *Goes up to door* C., *then turns to Lady V.*

LADY V.

Good-night, dear.

[*They kiss each other very heartily.*[3]

[3] *Lady J. opens door and then turns again.*

LADY J.

Vee, you won't say a word to Hardolph about this?

LADY V.

No, dear, of course not. Hardolph doesn't understand matrimonial kleptomania.

LADY J. [*Hastily glances at her watch.*]

I must rush off.

[*Exit,*[1] *followed by* LADY VERONA. *Leaves door open.*

MRS. KNAPMAN *enters*[2] *hastily puts the ham into the cabinet, finds a pair of* KNAPMAN'S *slippers*[3] *throws them off*[4] *looks round to see if the room is clear of her belongings.*[5] *Re-enter* LADY VERONA.[6]

MRS. K.[7]

Your room is quite ready, my lady. Shall I wait on you?

LADY V.

Yes, please. Where is Knapman?[8]

MRS. K.

He's gone to pay a visit to his mother at Willesden Green; and she being very aged he might be a little late on account of her dropsy. There's no need for me to wait up, unless your ladyship wishes me to.

LADY V.

No, I shall be going back to Oxfordshire by the half-past ten train. I shall want some breakfast.[9]

MRS. K.

Yes, my lady. Ham and eggs? Or a sole——

LADY V.

Anything. A sole will do.

[1] *At back.*

[2] *Right.*

[3] *In front of table* R.

[4] *Door right.*

[5] *A door is heard to slam off* L.

[6] *At back.*

[7] *Stands behind chair* L. C.

[8] *Gets her hat, gloves and bag from chair down* R.

[9] *Goes up* R. C.

MRS. K.

Yes, my lady.[1]

LADY V.[2]

Oh, Mrs. Knapman, you needn't mention my visit to town with Lady Joyce.

MRS. K.

Oh no, my lady, of course not.[3]

[Exit LADY VERONA.[4] MRS. KNAPMAN *looks round, draws down the window sash, bolts it, puts out electric light. Exit.*[5] *A long pause.* [6] *The clock in room strikes the half hour. The clock at back also chimes the half hour.*

The front door is heard to open, and KNAPMAN *enters at back, smoking, turns up the electric light, takes his pipe out of his mouth, breathes heavily as if oppressed by the heat.*

KNAP.

Whew![7]

SIR J. *[Voice heard outside.]*

Hillo, Knapman, is that you?

KNAP. *[With cordial, respectful recognition.*[8]

Sir Joseph! I didn't know you were in town, sir!

SIR J. *[Voice outside,]*

I wish I wasn't. I've just come up from Devonshire, and I've lost all my luggage. Any of your folks in town?

KNAP.

No, Sir Joseph. Would you care to come inside for a moment?

[1] *By this time Mrs. K. has moved from back of chair* L. C. *to back of table* L. *and is about to fold the table-cloth up.*

[2] *Going off* C. *stops, pauses.*

[3] *Stops folding cloth suddenly and makes a grimace to indicate to audience that she suspects something.*

[4] *At back.*

[5] *At back.*

[6] *All lights on stage go out when electric brackets go.*

[7] *Closes door, takes his coat off, throws it on chair by cabinet, moves down to window* L., *opens it, sits on sill and smokes quietly.*

[8] *Leaning out of window.*

SIR J.

I don't mind if I do, Knapman.

KNAP.

I'll let you in, Sir Joseph.[1]

[1] *Comes away from window, gets his coat, puts his coat on, exit at back, is heard to open the front door.*

A few moments later SIR JOSEPH LACY *enters at back, an English gentleman about forty. He is in morning dress, as if he had just come from a journey.* KNAPMAN *follows him on.*[2]

[2] *Closes door and steps down.*

KNAP.

Lost your luggage, Sir Joseph?

SIR J.

Every stick of it.[3]

[3] *Places his hat, coat and stick on table* L. C. *then crosses to table* R. *and sits* L. *of it.*

KNAP.

That's unlucky.

SIR J.

I've had a beastly unlucky day. First of all my man Staddon gets laid up with chicken-pox; I have to come to town alone; get up here; no luggage; telegraph all along the line, no sign of it; can't get into my chambers as I've let them till next month; drive off to my club, finds it's shut for repairs. Whew! It's very warm! Can you manage a drop of anything to drink, Knapman?

KNAP.

I can give you a whiskey and plain water, Sir Joseph.

SIR J.

Good.[4] Mr. Mayne shooting in Scotland?

[4] *Knapman goes to cabinet, brings whiskey bottle and tumbler and jug of water.*

KNAP.

Yes, Sir Joseph.

SIR J.

Lady Verona with him?

KNAP.

No, Sir Joseph.[1] Her ladyship is staying for a few weeks in Oxfordshire. [*Putting whiskey in front of* SIR JOSEPH.] Is there anything else you stand in need of, Sir Joseph?

[1] *Brings things down to table* R.

SIR J.

Nothing, my good Knapman[2]—except a bed in a nice large—whew!—cool room. I don't like going to an hotel without any luggage; I suppose I shall[3] have to turn in at the Junior—beastly stuffy little rooms they are—and a night like this—Whew!

[2] *Knapman goes back to cabinet, shuts the door of it and then drops down* C.

[3] *Helps himself to whiskey and water.*

KNAP.

I could put you up in Mr. Mayne's room for the night, if you don't mind——

SIR J.

That's a good idea of yours, Knapman.

KNAP.

I'm sure Mr. Mayne would only be too delighted to oblige you.

SIR J.

I'm sure he would. I sha'n't be inconveniencing anyone?

KNAP.

Not a bit, Sir Joseph. There's nobody in the house except the missus and me. And she's in bed and fast asleep.

SIR J.

Very well, Knapman, you shall put me up here for the night. Lucky for me I happened to catch sight of you.

KNAP.

Wasn't it, sir?

SIR J.

[1] *Takes a cigarette out.*

You're still very comfortable here, I suppose, Knapman? [1]

KNAP.

Well yes, sir, in a general way. Of course, Sir Joseph, I shall always consider the happiest period of my life was the fifteen years I spent in your father's service.

SIR J.

[2] *Lights cigarette.*

Ah! Dear old dad! [2] Good sort, wasn't he? Fifteen years you were in our family, eh?

KNAP.

Yes, Sir Joseph. And except for the upsets on your account, Sir Joseph, if I'm not impertinent in reminding you of your youthful sprees——

SIR J.

Oh, no, Knapman, oh, no. Hey! Hey! [*Sighs.*] Ah! Ah! Youthful sprees and I have long been strangers.

KNAP.

All over and done with, Sir Joseph?

SIR J.

All over and done with.

KNAP.

You did go it a terrific pace in those days, sir.

SIR J.

Did I, Knapman? You think so?

KNAP.

Well, sir, what do you think?

SIR J.

I suppose I did.

KNAP.

That night after the races, the young lady that lost her two mammas, one after the other. Ha! ha! [KNAPMAN *laughs;* SIR JOSEPH *laughs in company.*] That was a rum go, sir.

SIR J. [*Laughing.*]

Ha! Ha! It was a rum go, Knapman.

KNAP.

And you looking so innocent over it all the while. If I might say so, Sir Joseph, that's the best of you.

SIR J.

What's the best of me?

KNAP.

Your looking so innocent.[1] You always did, Sir Joseph. And [*gazing at* SIR JOSEPH] so you do now, sir.

[1] *Sir Joseph puts on an innocent babyish expression and looks at Knapman.*

SIR J.

Do I? I look innocent still. You think so, eh?

KNAP.

Yes, Sir Joseph. Nobody would take you for——

SIR J.

For what, Knapman?

KNAP.

Well, nobody would take you for——

SIR J.

Go on, Knapman! Go on!

KNAP.

Well, if you'll pardon my saying so, for the tremendous lady-killer we all know you are. You do look so remarkably innocent.

SIR J.

I do, eh? Upon my word, Knapman, I begin to feel remarkably innocent. Heigho! Heigho! [*Drinks up his whiskey, rises and yawns.*] Now, Knapman, I'm ready for bed.[1]

KNAP.

Very well, sir.[2] What time shall I call you, sir?

SIR J.

Oh, say half-past eight. [*Yawns.*] I think I can put in a good nine hours of it to-night.

[SIR JOSEPH *yawns, and exit at back.* KNAPMAN *turns out light and follows him.*[3]

CURTAIN.

Curtain remains down for half a minute to signify the passing of the night.

SCENE 2.[4] *The same room the next morning. It is now very tidy; the furniture is all in its right place, and all traces of the* KNAPMANS' *occupation are removed. The table right is laid for breakfast for one person, with a spotless table-cover. Discover* MRS. KNAPMAN *at the table; she is laying the breakfast.*

Enter KNAPMAN *at back, leaving door open.*

KNAP. [*Cordially.*]

Good morning, Eliza.[5]

[1] *Moves table* L. C. *Knapman moves to window. Sir J. takes up his hat, puts it on, then his coat and stick and moves already up to door* C.

[2] *Shuts down and bolts window.*

[3] *All lights go as before. All limes white. Float and lengths full up everywhere Electric sconces out.*

[4] *The table* L. C. *is moved up stage a little, the chair that Knapman sat in is moved to side of wall above window. The armchair is brought down* L. C. *a little, the chair* R. *of table* R. *is moved up stage to* R. *side of china cabinet. The covers are pulled off the curtains; the paper taken from off writing table; paper taken from fire-place and the hat box taken off top of china cabinet. In the place of the Knapmans table-cloth on table* L. C. *is a bowl of flowers.*

[5] *Comes to table* L. *of her.*

MRS. K.

That means you weren't in a proper condition to say "Good night."

KNAP.

There's no pleasing you, Eliza. You told me to sleep up in the attic so as not to rob you of your beauty-sleep. Well, so I did.

MRS. K.

Yes, and the moment you'd took yourself off her ladyship turned up.

KNAP.

Her ladyship!

Enter LADY VERONA *at back, carrying her hat, etc.*

LADY V.

Good morning, Knapman.[1]

[1] *Comes down* C.

KNAP.

Good morning, your ladyship.

LADY V. [*Taking out her watch.*]

My watch has stopped. What's the right time?

MRS. K.[2]

That clock is quite right, my lady.

[2] *Pointing to clock* R.

LADY V.[3]

Then I've plenty of time to catch the ten-thirty. You can bring up the breakfast.[4]

[3] *Crosses to fire* R., *places her hat down on chair down* R. *Knapman drops down to* L. C.

[4] *Goes to desk* L.

MRS. K.

Yes, my lady.

[*Exit* MRS. KNAPMAN *at back, closing door.*

KNAP. [*Embarrassed.*]

I beg pardon, my lady——

LADY V.

What is it? [1]

[1] *Sits at desk.*

KNAP.

I happened to be out last evening when your ladyship arrived——

LADY V.

Yes. How's your mother?

KNAP. [*Puzzled.*]

My mother? She's about as usual, my lady.

LADY V.

I'm going to send her another parcel of old linen——

KNAP.

Thank you, my lady.

LADY V.

Tell her to let me know if there is anything else she wants.

KNAP.

Thank you, my lady. I was about to say——

LADY V.

Well?

KNAP.

Just as I was shutting up last night, Sir Joseph Lacy happened to be passing——

LADY V.

Indeed!

KNAP.

He'd lost all his luggage, and his club was closed for cleaning-up——

LADY V.

Well?

KNAP.

So being a friend of Mr. Mayne's and yours I took the liberty of putting him up for the night.

LADY V.

Here?

KNAP.

Yes, my lady, in Mr. Mayne's room. [LADY V. *Smiles.*]

LADY V.

Where is he now?

KNAP.

He's just coming down. I've been valeting him and lending him some of Mr. Mayne's things. Here he is——[1]

[1] *When Sir J. comes down Knapman goes to table* R.

Enter SIR JOSEPH.[2]

[2] *At back, leaves door open.*

SIR J. [*Surprised.*]

What! Lady Vee? How d'ye do? This is a surprise! Just come up to town?

[*Shaking hands cordially.*]

LADY V.[3]

[3] *Rises.*

No, I spent the night here.

SIR J.

Here? [*To* KNAPMAN.] Why didn't you tell me her ladyship was in town?

KNAP.[4]

[4] *Busying himself with breakfast things.*

I hadn't the least idea of it, Sir Joseph. I'd just stepped out on a little private business, and her ladyship arrived during my absence.

LADY V.

Well, it's very absurd. Now you are here, you'd better stay and have breakfast with me——

Re-enter MRS. KNAPMAN *at back with a tray containing plates, dishes, etc.* MRS. KNAPMAN *shows some astonishment at seeing* SIR JOSEPH.

SIR J.

Thanks very much. Good morning, Mrs. Knapman.

MRS. K.

[0] *Looks at Knapman inquiringly.*

Good morning, Sir Joseph.[0]

LADY V.

Sir Joseph will take breakfast with me. What have you got?

MRS. K.

There's only a fried sole, my lady. Shall I get some bacon and eggs?

[LADY VERONA *looks inquiringly at* SIR JOSEPH.

SIR J.

Not for me. A mere fraction of that sole, and your company will be a perfect breakfast for me.

LADY V.

Lay a knife and fork for Sir Joseph.

[1] *Goes off right and returns.*

[KNAPMAN [1] *brings back knife and fork, plate, etc., for* SIR JOSEPH, *helps* MRS. KNAPMAN *to lay the table.* LADY VERONA [2] *regards* SIR JOSEPH *comically, and has a little fit of laughter.*

[2] *Sits down* L. C.

SIR J.

What are you laughing at?

LADY V.

At this extraordinary adventure. What has brought you to town in August?

SIR J.

I'm going through to the Engadine; I leave Victoria at eleven—that is, if my luggage turns up in time. What has brought you up to town?

LADY V.

Me? Oh—nothing—a little shopping.

MRS. K.

The breakfast is ready, my lady.

[LADY VERONA[1] *goes to table, motioning* SIR. J. *to sit opposite her, he does so.*[2]

KNAP.[3]

Is there anything else your ladyship requires?[4]

LADY V.

No, you needn't wait. [*Exit* MRS. KNAPMAN.][5] Oh, Knapman, I shall want a hansom at ten.

KNAP.

Yes, your ladyship.[6]

[*Exit* KNAPMAN.[7] LADY VERONA, *having seated herself,*[8] *points* SIR JOSEPH *to a seat. He sits.*[9]

SIR J.

Now! Sole! Let me give you some sole.

LADY V.

Thank you. Coffee?

SIR J.

Thank you.

LADY V.

How many lumps?

[1] *Rises.*

[2] *Sir J. goes at table to right.*

[3] R.

[4] *Places chair* R. *of table for Sir J.*

[5] *At back.*

[6] *Removes cover from sole and places it on table* R.

[7] *At back.*

[8] L. *of table.*

[9] R. *of table.*

SIR J.

Ah! Oughtn't you to know? This isn't the first time we have breakfasted together.

LADY V.

It's the first time we breakfasted alone; mamma was always at the head of the table in those days.

SIR J. [*Sighing.*]

Ah! Ah! In those days!

LADY V.

I'll risk two lumps.

SIR J.

And I will take whatever you consider good for me.[1]

[1] *Business of handing each other plates and cups, and of helping themselves.*

LADY V.

Shall you be away long?

SIR J.

Can't say. I may go on to Italy—in that case I sha'n't be back till the end of October. What are your plans?

LADY V.

I'm staying in Oxfordshire for another week. Then I join Hardolph in Scotland.

SIR J.

Dear old Hardolph, I'm very fond of Hardolph. I've only one grudge against him——

LADY V.

What's that?

SIR J.

Well, when a man robs you of the one thing that would have transformed this world from a waste,

howling wilderness into a—. Now, candidly, Vee, you wouldn't like me to forgive Hardolph, would you?

LADY V.

Jo, you are incorrigible.

SIR J.

No, I'm not; I'm the sweetest, gentlest creature. A child can guide me. Tell me to forgive Hardolph for having stolen you from me, and I'll try to love him like a brother. Tell me not to cherish a hopeless, incurable passion for you, and I'll make frantic efforts to crush it.[1]

[1] *Goes on eating.*

LADY V.

My dear Jo, it's useless to try this tone upon me.

SIR J.

What tone?[2]

[2] *Takes his cup up.*

LADY V.

This tone of silly, sentimental badinage, which doesn't allow the woman the poor gratification of feeling that she is being made love to in earnest.

SIR J.

Oh,[3] if you wish for that kind of gratification—— (*approaching her*).

[3] *Rises quickly and goes round back of table to her.*

LADY V.

I don't.[4] What have you been doing in Devonshire?

[4] *Sir J. laughs and sits down again. Lady V. laughs.*

SIR J.

I've had an awful fortnight with my uncle, Professor Tofield.

LADY V.

The professor is a terror, isn't he?

SIR J.

Awful. However, his third wife left the old chap a heap of money, and as I'm his nearest relation I keep in with him. How are all your folks? Lady Joyce and Fanny?

LADY V.

Very well indeed. Fanny came up from his yacht last night, and Joyce joined him.

SIR J.

I'm glad that match has turned out so well.

LADY V.

Excellently. Help yourself to a little more sole.

SIR J.

Let me give you some——

LADY V.

No thank you. A little marmalade?

SIR J.

Let me give you some first.

LADY V.

Thank you.

[*Helps her, and he helps himself, looking at her with great admiration. Pause.*]

SIR J.

How strange that we should be seated here at breakfast—together—alone. I've often wondered ——

LADY V.

What?

SIR J.

Why did you chuck me as you did?

LADY V.

Ah! Why did I? Because I felt sure that if I did marry you I should repent. But then I felt equally sure that if I didn't marry you I should repent. You know marriage is really nothing but a trap of that kind for all of us poor women. Well between wondering how unhappy I should be without you, and how very much more unhappy I should be with you, I found I couldn't catch the train, and next morning poor dear mamma found out all about it, and squashed it altogether. I was simply heart-broken.

SIR J.

Ah!

LADY V.

For some days—if not weeks.

SIR J.

And then you married Hardolph.

LADY V.

And then I married Hardolph.

SIR J.

And my life was ruined.

LADY V.

Oh no, my dear Jo, I'm not going to be saddled with your ruin. If you remember your life was ruined several times before you met me. And how many times has it been ruined since? eh?

SIR J.

Ah! That's the result of giving a boy the name of Joseph!

LADY V.

What is?

SIR J.

When I woke up to the responsibilities of my name, I did my best to live up to them. But when I found what my godfathers and godmother had let me in for, I instinctively rebelled. Human nature refuses to be driven into a groove. My nature refused to be driven into the groove of Joseph—and here I am, a waif and stray, an orphan of forty, a mere bit of masculine wreckage, floating on any tide, without any rudder, to any unknown shore.[1]

[1] *Takes up cup and drinks.*

LADY V.

Poor orphan of forty! Let me give you a little more coffee![2]

[2] *Sir J. rises and goes round back of table with his cup and saucer. Lady V. helps him to coffee.*

SIR J.

You were attached to me, Vee. You're wearing the cross I gave you on our journey back from Scotland.

LADY V.

I've never troubled to take it off the chain. But you can have it back if you like. Will you?[3]

[3] *Offering to take cross off the chain she wears round her neck.*

SIR J.

No. I've got the little heart you gave me. [*Showing it on his watch chain.*] Confess, Vee, you felt it very deeply when our engagement was broken off?

LADY V.

You want to know the truth? I felt it terribly; more than I like to remember.

SIR J.

Ah!

[*Approaching very tenderly.*

LADY V.

Now. Please don't get sentimental. It was the

very best thing that could have happened for me. I'm very glad mamma was so firm and parted us. Now are you satisfied?

[*Smiling at him.*[1]

SIR J.

If you are happy—yes.[2]

LADY V.

I am happy. Hardolph is the best of husbands.

SIR J.

I'm sure he is. I'm sure he is! A little difficult at times, our dear Hardolph, eh? hum? hum?

LADY V.

Perhaps; but I keep a little birch rod for him on such occasions.

SIR J.

A little birch rod? Of what nature?

LADY V.

That's my secret. Every wise woman keeps a birch rod for her husband when he's difficult. Now tell me about yourself. Why don't you find some nice girl and settle down?

[*He shakes his head.*

SIR J.

I shall never marry.

[*Looking at her.*

LADY V.

Your hopeless passion for me? [*He nods.*] You know, Jo, I don't in the least mind your having a hopeless passion for me. I think it's rather nice of you—only you will please to recognize that it is hopeless.

[*Sighs.*

[1] *Sir J. moves round to* R. *of table.*

[2] *Sits again.*

SIR J.

I know that.[1]

[1] *Leans back.*

LADY V.

Very well, then—we can be on the best terms. You shall indulge your hopeless passion for me, and I'll be a sister to you, shall I?

SIR J.

I thought you didn't like silly badinage?

LADY V.

Oh, yes, in a woman—it's often her best protection. What makes you look so serious?

SIR J.

Perhaps I oughtn't to tell you.

LADY V.

Oh do—if it's about your hopeless passion.

SIR. J.[2] [*With great seriousness.*]

[2] *Sir J. moves his chair round the back of table till he is quite close to Lady V. he then sits.*

I don't defend my life, Vee. I know I've wasted it in all kinds of folly and—worse. And now I only live in the moment, and for the moment. I simply daren't look backward or forward. And so I chaff myself and everything and everybody, as I've been doing this morning. That's because I've lost the power of feeling or caring very deeply about anything——

LADY V.

Are you sure of that?

SIR J.

Yes! yes. There's nothing left in the world that isn't fit to be chaffed—except you, Vee; and upon my soul at times I'm ready to chaff my love for you—though God knows it's the one thing that is

sacred to me—it's the one thing in my life that I don't regret, and that I should like to be thinking of when I die—the love I had for you, the love I *have* for you,[1] Vee.

[1] *Takes her hand.*

LADY V.

Jo! you mustn't speak like this.[2] If you do I must ask you never to see me again.

[2] *Sir J. releases her hand and sits back in his chair.*

SIR J.

You needn't be afraid, I love you too much to bring you into my life. But I mean every word of what I said. There! you've heard it, and you know that I shall always love you. Now that's all over. May I have some more coffee? What were we talking about. Oh, you were going to be my sister.

LADY V.[3]

[3] *Lady V. pours out coffee.*

I don't think I can be your sister now. It's too dangerous. [*Looks at him.*] No!

SIR J.

Well, be my something! Don't leave me out in the cold.[4]

[4] *Both laugh.*

LADY V.

Poor orphan of forty! [*Suddenly.*] I'll adopt you! I'll be your mother.

SIR J.

No, don't be my mother.

LADY V.

Yes, I will.

SIR J.

Oh, very well. What are you going to do with me?

LADY V.

When we all come back to town I shall take you in hand and marry you to that very nice girl.

SIR J.

No, don't.

LADY V.

Yes, I will.

SIR J.

Oh, very well. Only do take a little care whom you marry me to.

LADY V.

I will. She shall be very nice.

SIR J.

I wonder if she'll have me? [1]

[1] *Drinks his coffee.*

LADY V.

I'm sure she will, if you——

SIR J.

If I what? [2]

[2] *Puts cup down suddenly.*

LADY V.

Surely you know the way to win a woman's heart?

SIR J.[3]

Do I? Do I? I've forgotten. Do tell me how! Come now, give me a lesson.

[Taking her hand and kissing it.

[3] *Moves closer to her and speaks very softly and winningly.*

LADY V.

Jo! Jo!

[They are in a somewhat embarrassed position when MRS. KNAPMAN *enters.*[4]

[4] *At back. Mrs. K. must enter very quickly on her cue, as the door is opened Mrs. Tavender is seen in the passage outside the door. Mrs. Knapman seeing the embarrassment of Sir J. and Lady V. gives a half glance behind her back to Mrs. Tavender and then shuts the door on her.*

MRS. K.

I beg pardon, my lady.

LADY V.

What is it?

MRS. K.

Mr. and Mrs Tavender are in the hall.

LADY V.

Oh—show them in.[1] [*Exit* MRS. KNAPMAN.] What can have brought them here at this time in the morning?[2]

Enter[3] MR. *and* MRS. TAVENDER, *shown in by* MRS. KNAPMAN. TAVENDER *is a short, stout, sandy, florid, good-natured man of thirty-five.* MRS. TAVENDER *is a frivolous, irresponsible, empty-headed, chattering little creature of twenty-five. They both show evident surprise at seeing* SIR JOSEPH, *and stand at the doorway in an embarrassed way.*[4]

LADY V. [*Going up to her.*]

Cissy, this is a surprise. [*Shaking hands with her.*] Harry, how are you?

TAV.

Thanks; flourishing.
[*Stands in doorway.*

LADY V.

Come in—what's the matter?[5]

MRS. T.

Nothing, dear; if you're engaged——
[*Embarrassed.*

LADY V.

Not at all. [*To* MRS. KNAPMAN.] Why didn't you announce Mr. and Mrs. Tavender in the ordinary way, and show them in?

[1] *Mrs. K. opens door showing Mr. and Mrs. Tavender standing outside.*

[2] *Lady V. rises and goes down* L. *Sir J. rises and goes down* R. *to fireplace leaving the two chairs close together by breakfast table.*

[3] *At back.*

[4] *Mrs. K. gets near door* R.

[5] *Mrs. T. gives an embarrassed laugh.*

MRS. K.

I beg pardon, my lady. I understood you to say last night you didn't wish it to be known you are in town.

[*Looks exchanged between* TAVENDER *and* MRS. TAVENDER. *Exit* MRS. KNAPMAN.[1] *There is an air of restraint and embarrassment all through the following scene. Long pause.*[2]

SIR J.

How d'ye do, Mrs. Tavender?

[*Shaking hands.*

MRS. T.

How are you, Sir Joseph?

SIR J. [*To* TAVENDER.]

How are you, Tavender?

[*Shaking hands.*

TAV.

Thanks, flourishing. And you?

SIR J.

Splendid. [*A little pause of embarrassment.*[3]

LADY V.

Sit down, Cissy. Harry![4] Have you had breakfast?

TAV.

Oh yes!

MRS. T.

Oh yes, dear.

[*Together. Slight pause.*

[1] *Right.*

[2] *Sir J. goes up* R. C.

[3] *Sir J. returns to* R.

[4] *Mrs. T. comes down* R. C. *Mr. T. follows on her* R. *they both give a suspicious glance at the table laid for breakfast and the two chairs close together Lady V. seeing them look says very quickly "Have you had breakfast?" when she says this they both start and speak together.*

LADY V.

Then sit down.[1] What has brought you up at this hour?

[TAVENDER *and* MRS. TAVENDER *sit down in an embarrassed way.*

TAV.

You haven't heard from Hardolph?

LADY V.

No. Nothing has happened?

TAV. / MRS. T.

Oh no! Oh no!

Oh no, at least——

[*Together. Slight pause.*

LADY V.

My dear Cissy, is anything the matter?

TAV.

No.

MRS. T.

No.

TAV.

You know that Hardolph is coming from Scotland——

LADY V.

No. When?

TAV.

This morning. He reaches Saint Pancras at ten.

LADY V.

Oh! I hadn't the least idea. What's bringing him to town?

[1] *The Tavenders exchange uncomfortable glances and very slowly sit down. Mrs. Tavender in the arm chair* L. *and* C. *and Tavender on the extreme edge of Lady V.'s chair at breakfast table Lady V. sits on chair by desk* L.

TAV.

The Chillingham trustee business. We had to meet and sign a heap of deeds. Hardolph wired me to Weybridge last night to meet him here a little after ten this morning and as Cissy had a few things to do in town——[1]

[1] *Half rising, with appealing glances to Mrs Tavender.*

MRS. T.[2]

[2] *Rising.*

I think we'd better be going,[3] or I shan't get through before lunch.

[3] *Tavender rises.*

LADY V.

Oh, don't hurry away.[4] Why didn't Hardolph let me know he was coming up?

[4] *Tavender sits again.*

TAV.

I don't suppose he knew himself till yesterday afternoon. To-day was the only day the judge could give us, and as it was August nobody was in town; so we've had to telegraph everywhere to get the trustees and lawyers together.

[5] *Rising again.*

MRS. T.[5]

Harry, I must be at Fifine's at ten, and you must help me to choose the colors——

TAV.

[6] *Taps, rises. Lady V. rises, Tav. goes up C.*

Of course, dear.[6] By Jove [*pulling out watch*], I shall only just have time to get back here and meet Hardolph.[7]

[7] *Mrs T. goes on embarrassed laugh.*

[SIR JOSEPH *has been quietly watching the scene, standing and leaning against mantelpiece. He now comes a little forward.*

SIR J.

My dear Tavender, it's very evident that you and Mrs. Tavender are a little surprised to find me here breakfasting with Lady Verona.

TAV.

Not at all, my dear fellow.

MRS. T.

Not at all. At this time of year, when nobody's in town, it's quite nice for old friends to run up against each other and—and——[1] Harry!

[1] *Looking at Tavender.*

TAV.

I assure you, we think nothing of it.

MRS. T.

Why, of course it's the most natural thing in the world. Now, Harry![2]

[2] *Both start to go up C.*

SIR J.

No—just a moment, please. Now that the matter has been raised you'd better hear how it happened, eh, Lady Vee?

LADY V.

Oh, yes—it's really most ridiculous. I came from Oxfordshire last evening quite unexpectedly. I hadn't the least idea that Sir Joseph was in town ——

MRS. T.

Of course not. How should you?

TAV.

I assure you we—a—[*stops, confused, and looks at his wife*] don't intend to take the least notice of it.

MRS. T.

It's just one of those things that are constantly occurring; and then if by any chance it leaks out, people begin to gossip and put the wrong interpretation on it.

SIR J. [*Very sternly.*]

People must not put the wrong interpretation on it in this instance. So I'll give you the exact particulars——

TAV.

My dear Jo, you needn't trouble——

SIR J. [*Firmly.*]

Yes, if you please——

TAV.

Well, if you insist——

MRS. T.

But we aren't the least curious——

SIR J.

I came up to town last night from Devonshire, and lost all my luggage. My club was closed for cleaning, and I happened to be passing that window about a quarter to eleven.

[*Pointing to window.*

MRS. T.

That window, there?

SIR J.

Yes. Knapman was leaning out of it. Knapman is a very old servant of my father's.

MRS. T.

How very natural he should be leaning out of the window!

SIR J.

Yes. Well, I was dead tired, and when Knapman offered to put me up for the night, I simply jumped at the idea!

TAV.

I should have jumped at it myself. Ta-ta.
[*Offering to go.*

LADY V.

Of course when Knapman offered to put Sir Joseph up for the night, he hadn't the least idea I was in town.

MRS. T.

Of course not. It's exactly similar to another case we know of—isn't it, Harry?

TAV.

Yes—yes,[1] I'll just run round with you to Fifine's and be back here to meet Hardolph. [*Significantly.*] He'll be here about a quarter past ten.

[1] *Both go up to door* C.

MRS. T.

Good-bye, Sir Joseph; Good-bye, Vee.

TAV.

Bye, bye, Jo; ta-ta, Vee.
[*Hurries off.*[2] SIR JOSEPH *and* LADY VERONA *left alone, look at each other and then laugh at each other.*

[2] *At back with Mrs. T.*

SIR J.

They evidently believe that you and I met here by appointment.

LADY V.

Evidently. And she's such a silly gossiping creature.[3]

[3] *Crosses to* R.

SIR J.

Shall I wait and see Hardolph?

LADY V.

No. Hardolph is awfully difficult at times—and with you——

SIR. J.[1]

Why with me?

LADY V.

Well, you aren't exactly the man a husband would choose to find breakfasting with his wife.

SIR J.

No, I suppose not. [*Suddenly takes out watch.*] Quarter to ten! I've got it! You must take a cab and meet Hardolph at Saint Pancras before he sees the Tavenders; tell him exactly how it happened and come on here with him.

LADY V.

Shall I have time?[2]

SIR J.

Yes, if you make haste. The train's sure to be a few minutes late. I'll put you in a cab.[3]

LADY V.

And you?

SIR J.

I'm going on to the club to see if my luggage has turned up; I'll come back here and meet you and Hardolph. I'm sure that's the best! make haste![4]

[*Exeunt* SIR JOSEPH *and* LADY VERONA.[5]

A pause.

MRS. KNAPMAN *cautiously peeps out of door, right, sees that no one is in the room, enters, goes to window, opens the sash; looks out.* KNAPMAN *enters.*[6]

KNAP.

They've gone off together——[7]

MRS. K.

No. He's put her into a cab and she's drove off alone.

[*Again looks out of window.*

[1] *Moves a step to* R.

[2] *Puts her hat on.*

[3] *Goes up* C. *and stands* L. *of door.*

[4] *Lady V. goes up* C. *to door.*

[5] *At back.*

[6] *Back from* R.

[7] *Comes down to* L. C.

KNAP.

What's he doing?

MRS. K.

He's walking off in his usual careless manner. He's turned into Piccadilly.

[*Withdraws from window.*

KNAP.[1]

[1] L. C.

Didn't you say Mr. Tavender told you the master is coming up from Scotland this morning?

MRS. K.[2]

[2] L.

Yes, I was standing at the front door when Mr. and Mrs. Tavender came up. "Good-morning, Mrs. Knapman," he says; "I've come up to see Mr. Mayne;" "He's in Scotland," I says. "No," he says, "he'll be here a little after ten, so I'll just step inside and wait for him." Well, I didn't know what to do, because last night her ladyship says, "Don't mention anything about Lady Joyce and me being up in town," she says. So I says to Mr. Tavender, "I beg pardon, but her ladyship is now at breakfast in the morning-room. I'll inquire whether it's convenient for her to see you." [3]

[3] *Goes to* R. C.

KNAP.[4]

[4] *Going to window.*

Looks very peculiar![5]

[5] *Puts his head out of the window and suddenly withdraws it, snapping his fingers at Mrs. K. as a caution to her to get out of the way.*

MRS. K.

What's the matter?

KNAP.

Mr. and Mrs. Tavender have come back again.[6]

[6] *Motions Mrs. K. to go off* R.

[*A knock at outer door. Exit* KNAPMAN] [7]

[7] *At back.*

MRS. KNAPMAN *stands in a listening attitude for a second, she goes off very gently,*[8] *on tiptoe, closing the door after her softly.*

[8] *Right.*

Enter[1] MR. *and* MRS. TAVENDER, *followed by* KNAPMAN.

[1] *At back.*

TAV.[2]

[2] *Comes* R.

Lady Verona has driven off, you say?

KNAP.[3]

[3] C.

Yes, sir, in an hansom.

MRS. T.[4]

[4] L. C.

And Sir Joseph?

KNAP.

Sir Joseph put her ladyship into the cab, and then walked off by himself.

[TAVENDER *and* MRS. TAVENDER *exchange glances.*

TAV.

Oh, very well. We'll wait here for Mr. Mayne.

KNAP.

Yes, sir.

[5] *At back.*

[*Exit* KNAPMAN.[5] *Left alone, the* TAVENDERS *look at each other.*

MRS. T.

[6] *Sits in arm chair* L. C.

Well! who could have thought it?[6]

TAV. [*Grinning and chuckling.*]

I can't believe it! I can't believe it!

MRS. T.

They've always been very much attached to each other, and Sir Joseph is horribly fascinating.

TAV.

Oh, I wouldn't trust Jo Lacy with my grandmother. [*Grins, chuckles, and then bursts into a fit of laugh-*

ter.] [1] But Vee—! I couldn't have imagined that Vee would—well! well! well!

MRS. T.

One never knows. What convinced me was the stupid way they would keep on trying to excuse themselves.

TAV.

Oh that was d—ee—d silly of Jo. An old hand like him ought to know how to hold his tongue. And such an absurd story, too! Lost his luggage! Leaning out of that window!

MRS. T.

Oh, it was too ridiculous.

[*Laughs.*

TAV.

But she played her part very well.

MRS. T.

My dear Harry! Anyone could see through her in a moment. Now, Sir Joseph passed it off very well indeed. From his manner you might almost have thought he was telling the truth.

TAV.

Oh, no! Jo wasn't at all up to his usual form.

MRS. T.

Well, I'm glad we gave them the chance of slipping away.

TAV.

Yes! you see they cleared out the moment we'd gone.

MRS. T.

I never felt so awkward in my life, not even when

[1] *Goes to mirror which is hanging on wall* R., *looks at himself in it, smooths his hair, grins and then comes to* L. *of table* R. *and sits.*

I found your cousin Jack kissing Lady Henry in the harness room.

[1] *Drags his chair nearer to Mrs. T.*

TAV.[1]

Yes, that harness room row reminds me—[*Very solemnly.*] Now, Cissy, you'll hold your tongue about this?

MRS. T.

Of course I shall.

TAV.

Not a word to Hardolph about Vee being up in town.

MRS. T.

Of course not. But if Hardolph should find out that we knew—he is your cousin——

TAV.

I can't help that. I've got too many cousins to look after all their wives. Perhaps you'd better send a line to Vee——[2]

[2] *Rises puts his chair back to table and crosses to desk down L.*

[*Rising and going down to desk.*

MRS. T.

What about?

TAV.

Hardolph will be here in a moment. Make haste and get it written before he comes. [*He places chair for her*[3] *she seats herself and writes. Dictating.*] "My dear Vee, Harry thinks I'd better send you a line to say that neither he nor I shall mention a word about meeting you this morning to anyone——"

[3] *At writing-table below L. window.*

MRS. T. [*Having written.*]

"Anyone"——

TAV.

Underline "anyone."

MRS. T. [*Writing.*]

"With love, Cissy."

TAV.

There! that gives her a free hand to tell Hardolph or not as she pleases.

MRS. T.

Where shall I address it?

TAV.

Oh, Oxfordshire, I suppose.[1]

[1] *Goes to* C.

MRS. KNAPMAN *enters, right.*

MRS. K.

I beg pardon——

TAV.

Did Lady Verona leave word whether she was coming back this morning?

MRS. K.

No, sir.[2]

[2] *Coming down* R.

TAV.

Do you know where she has gone?

MRS. K.

Her ladyship intended to go to Oxfordshire by the half-past ten train.

TAV.

Then I suppose she has gone.[3] Now a stamp.[4] Will you please see that this letter is posted this morning?

[3] *Goes to Mrs. Tavender and gets letter.*

[4] *Takes a stamp out of his purse.*

MRS. K.

Yes, sir.[5]

[5] *Comes to* C.

TAV. [*He stamps letter and gives it to* MRS. KNAPMAN.]

It's very important.

MRS. K.

Yes, sir.[1] I beg pardon, sir——

TAV.

Well?

MRS. K.

Last night when her ladyship arrived she said she didn't wish it to be mentioned she was up in town.

[MR. *and* MRS. TAVENDER *exchange looks.*

TAV.

Then of course you won't mention it.

MRS. K.

Of course not, sir—we know our duty, but—[*Stands a little embarrassed, looking at letter.*] Of course we shan't mention it—of course not!

[*Exit.*[2]

Enter[3] HARDOLPH MAYNE, *an ordinary English gentleman of thirty-five in travelling clothes; he is followed by* KNAPMAN; MRS. KNAPMAN *puts letter in her pocket.*[4]

MAYNE.

Ah, my dear Harry, here you are! Cissy, how are you?

[*Shaking hands with* MRS. TAVENDER.

MRS. T.

How are you, Hardolph?

MAYNE.

Whew! This heat is awful. How are you, Harry?[5]

TAV.

Thanks. Flourishing!

MAYNE. [*To* KNAP.]

Has any telegram come for me?

KNAP.

No, sir.

MAYNE.

[*Taking off his summer overcoat.*] Take this and give it a brush. [*To* MR. *and* MRS. TAVENDER.] I rather thought Vee might come up.

[KNAPMAN *shows surprise at* MAYNE'S *remark, takes overcoat and hat from* MAYNE,[1] *listening to following conversation.*

[1] *And goes off slowly at back*

MRS. T.[2]

[2] *Exchanging look with Tavender.*

Does she expect you?

MAYNE.[3]

[3] C.

Well, when I found I should have to be in town to-day I wired her to come up if she could. She's in Oxfordshire with her people you know——

TAV.[4]

[4] L. C.

Yes——

MRS. T.

Yes——

MAYNE.

I haven't seen her for a fortnight. And as we parted with a little tiff I thought she might be glad of the chance of making it up, eh?

[*With a little laugh.*

TAV.

Yes.

MRS. T.

Naturally.

MAYNE.

So I told her to wire me here, and I'd meet her

somewhere and give her some lunch. And she hasn't even taken the trouble to reply!

TAV. No? } [*Together*]
MRS. T. No! }

[*Exchanging looks with* TAVENDER.

MAYNE.

Ah, well, after eight years of married life I suppose we mustn't expect these delicate little attentions from our wives, eh, Harry?

TAV.

We don't get them, do we? [1]

[1] *Mayne goes to* R. *talking and has got half-way down stage before he finishes speaking at letters, etc.*

MAYNE.[2]

To come seventy miles to take a simple meal with your husband—rather a severe strain on your wifely affection, eh, Cissy? [TAVENDER *glances at table.*

[2] *Goes up* R.

[3] *Crosses to* C.

MRS. T.[3]

Oh I feel sure Vee hasn't got your telegram, or there has been some mistake.

MAYNE.

Well, she's coming down to Scotland next week. And I've got no time to spare. Confounded nuisance this bothering business! Haslip has got his big shoot on to-morrow, and if I don't catch the two o'clock from Euston I shall be out of it. Now if I bustle about I shall just get through. Let me see—these trustee papers—where are they? Oh yes, in my secretary in the next room——[*Exit.*[4]

[4] *Door, right; leaving door open. They watch him off.*

MRS. T.

You see! He hasn't the least suspicion.

TAV.

No. Now, my dear Cissy, you will hold your tongue this time?

MRS. T.

My dear Harry, take care of your own tongue when you get in that club smoking-room. But I really think somebody should caution Vee, don't you?

TAV.

No! No! If there's going to be a scandal do let us keep out of it. Remember that awful harness-room row.—Now, Cissy, you will take care.—Hush!

MAYNE *re-enters,*[1] *with a bundle of legal documents in his hand.* KNAPMAN *enters,*[2] *with* MAYNE'S *hat and overcoat.*

[1] *Right.*

[2] *At back.*

MAYNE.

Now, Harry, are you ready?[3]

[3] *Mayne comes to* C. *from* R. *Knapman hands him his hat then goes behind Mayne to Mayne's* R. *holding the overcoat ready for him to put on.*

TAV.

Quite. Cissy, we'll pop you into a cab——

MRS. T.

Very well. And you'll meet me at Waterloo at four o'clock?

TAV.

Right.

MAYNE.[4]

[*To* KNAPMAN.] No, I'll carry it on my arm.
[*Taking overcoat.*]

[4] *During Mayne's lines with Knapman Mrs. T. has business with Tavender, taking her purse out and asking Tav. for change, etc.*

KNAP.

Shall you require your room to be prepared, sir?

MAYNE.

No, I'm not coming back. Send on my letters as

usual. Now, Harry! I do think Vee might have come up.

MRS. T.

Oh, I wouldn't worry about it——[1]

[1] *Goes up to door C.*

MAYNE.

No, but still—Not quite kind of her, eh?

TAV.

Come along! We mustn't keep old Justice Bonsar waiting.

[2] *At back.*

[*Hurrying* MAYNE *off.*[2] MRS. TAVENDER *has gone off.* KNAPMAN *has listened to the conversation and follows them off.*

[3] *Right.*

MRS. KNAPMAN *enters,*[3] *and begins clearing away the breakfast things. Re-enter* KNAPMAN, *stands in the centre of room, in a very puzzled attitude.*[4]

[4] *Leaves door open.*

KNAP.

I can't get the hang of it.

MRS. K.

The hang of what?

KNAP.

When her ladyship arrived last night, what was her manner?

MRS. K.

Well, both she and Lady Joyce had a flurried look.

KNAP.

Innocent flurried? Or fishy flurried?

MRS. K.

There was something peculiar about it.

KNAP.

Eliza, I'm afraid this is all a put-up job of Sir Joseph's.

MRS. K.

Think so?

KNAP.

Her ladyship's first word to me this morning was, "How's your mother? I'll send her some old linen. Tell her to let me know if there's anything she wants." That was as much as to bribe me for holding my tongue.

MRS. K.

Master don't suspect anything?

KNAP.

Not a word. He's as innocent as a baby.

MRS. K.

What had we better do?

KNAP.

Keep our mouths shut. He's a good master; and apart from this aberration of conduct Lady Verona is a good mistress. We've no right to wreck their married happiness by letting on.

MRS. K.

I sha'n't say a word, but I wouldn't answer for you when you get round at the "Lord Palmerston."

KNAP.

I never betray the secrets of my family, and don't you. But I'm sorry. Just Sir Joseph's old games! Lost his luggage! Drops in as if by accident! And only last night he told me as he's left off all his youthful sprees! Lost his luggage!

[1] *At back.*

SIR JOSEPH *enters hurriedly.*[1]

SIR J.

Oh, Knapman, I found the front door open and I came in.[2]

[2] *Goes down L. and puts his hat and stick on desk.*

KNAP.

Yes, Sir Joseph.

SIR J.

My luggage has turned up.

KNAP. [*Severely.*]

[3] *Looks at Mrs. K.*

I'm glad to hear it, Sir Joseph.[3]

SIR J.

Yes, got it all safe at Victoria.

KNAP. [*Same severe tone.*]

That must be a great relief, sir.

SIR J.

Has her ladyship returned yet?

KNAP.

No, Sir Joseph. Here is her ladyship.

[4] *At back.*

LADY VERONA *enters.*[4]

SIR J.

Well?

[5] *Coming down L. C.*

LADY V.[5]

My cab got blocked and the train was in before I got there.

SIR J.

Then you've missed him?

LADY V.

Has Mr. Mayne arrived?

KNAP.

Yes, my lady.

LADY V.

Where is he?

KNAP.

He has gone off again.

LADY V.

Where?

KNAP.

I don't know, my lady; but he said he wasn't returning here. So I expect he has gone back to Scotland.[1]

[1] *Sir J. goes to window.*

MRS. K.

Didn't you tell him I was here?

KNAP.

No, my lady; he was in such a hurry, I never got a chance of informing him. [*Exit.*[2]

[2] *At back.*

MRS. K.[3]

[3] *Mrs. K. comes behind table* R. *to* C.

My lady, here is a letter that Mrs. Tavender asked me to post your ladyship.

LADY V.

Oh, very well. [*Takes letter, reads it. Exit* MRS. KNAPMAN.[4] LADY VERONA *reads letter, shows indignation—hands it to* SIR JOSEPH, *who takes it and reads it. Watching him.*] You see! She actually imagines that I—oh—how dare she! I must write her——[5]

[4] R.

[5] *Crosses to desk* L.

SIR J.

No. She's a foolish little woman. You'll only make matters worse if you're angry with her. I wonder what has become of Hardolph?[6]

[6] *Goes to* R.

LADY V.

I suppose he has gone back to Scotland.

SIR J.

You must send him a history of the whole affair by to-night's post. I'll write him too.

[1] *Coming* L. C.

LADY V. [*Quickly.*] [1]

No—no—he wouldn't understand it coming from you.

SIR J.

Why not?

LADY V.

[2] *Takes letter from him.*

Because he—he wouldn't.[2] No, I'm going to Hardolph next week. And I'll explain everything the first suitable opportunity. But that horrid little Cissy!

[*She has unconsciously approached the window.*

SIR J. [*Following her tenderly.*]

Vee, I should never forgive myself if any harm came to you through me. You know how deeply I——

[3] *Pushes Sir J. away from her into* L. C. *of stage and then backs up above window holding the curtains a little in front of her.*

LADY V.[3]

Keep away from that window!

SIR J.

What's the matter?

LADY V.

There's that dreadful woman again.

SIR J.

Who?

LADY V.

Mrs. Pakenham. She lives opposite; she's the most

spiteful old creature. She saw you putting me into the cab just now and I could see from her look that she suspected——

SIR J.

What?

LADY V.

Oh, I don't know! The worst! That sort of person always does. And I've cut her so persistently! She'll only be too pleased to get a chance of making mischief about me.

SIR J.

[*Unconsciously approaching window.*] I can't tell you how sorry I am——

LADY V. [*Calls out alarmed.*]

Keep away from the window; don't let her see you. Jo, you don't think anything serious will come of this?

SIR J.[1]

How can it? But be sure you let Hardolph know.

LADY V.

Oh, I will, the first suitable opportunity. [*Has crept to the window; peeps out from behind curtains.*] She's there still. I'm sure she's watching this house.

SIR J.

What are you going to do now?

LADY V.

I must get back to Oxfordshire.[2] I shall just catch the eleven-fifteen. What are you going to do?

SIR J.

I'm off to Switzerland by the seven from Victoria.[3] I'll put you in a cab.[4]

[1] *Goes to* C.

[2] *Goes to* C.

[3] *Taking out watch.*

[4] *About to go up* C.

LADY V.

No—you mustn't be seen coming out from this house with me——

SIR J.

You're getting into a panic.

LADY V.

Yes, I am! I must try to steady myself. I'll go quietly out, and you stay here.[1]

[1] *Goes up to* C. *a little.*

SIR J.

Yes. But I've only just time to catch my train, and——[2]

[2] *Gets a few steps* R.

LADY V.

You don't wish to compromise me, do you?

SIR J.

You shouldn't ask that.[3]

[3] *Coming to* C.

LADY V.

Then wait here at least five minutes after I've gone.

SIR J.

Oh, but——

LADY V.

Yes, please. Good-bye.

SIR J.

Good-bye.

[*He takes her hand, and snatches the glove which is in her left hand; kisses her hand very tenderly.*

LADY V.[4]

[4] *Goes up to door* C. *Joseph follows on her* R.

Jo, you are incorrigible. Now, Jo, you won't leave here till the hand of that clock points ten minutes to eleven. Promise me!

SIR J.

Ten minutes to eleven. I promise.

[*Exit* LADY VERONA.[1] *Left alone, he sits, shows signs of great impatience;*[2] *looks at his watch, looks at the clock,*[3] *kisses her glove, puts it in his pocket, rises again, stamps his feet, inadvertently goes to the window; stands there a moment, starts suddenly back from it.*

[1] *At back.*

[2] *Goes down.*

[3] *Moves* R. C.

SIR J.

There's that damned old woman again!

[KNAPMAN *has entered,*[4] *to see his movement.*

[4] *At back.*

KNAP.

Anything the matter, Sir Joseph?

SIR J.

No.[5]

[KNAPMAN *regards him curiously for a moment or two.*

[5] *Crosses to down* R. *and then turns.*

KNAP.

Anything I can do for you, sir?

SIR J.

No—no—[KNAPMAN *is withdrawing at back.*] Yes! [*Taking a luggage ticket out of his waistcoat pocket.*] My luggage is in the cloak-room at Victoria. Here's the ticket! Will you take a cab, get it out and register the two big portmanteaux for Lucerne?

KNAP.

Yes, Sir Joseph. Lucerne.

[*Going off, stops, looks at* SIR JOSEPH *curiously.*

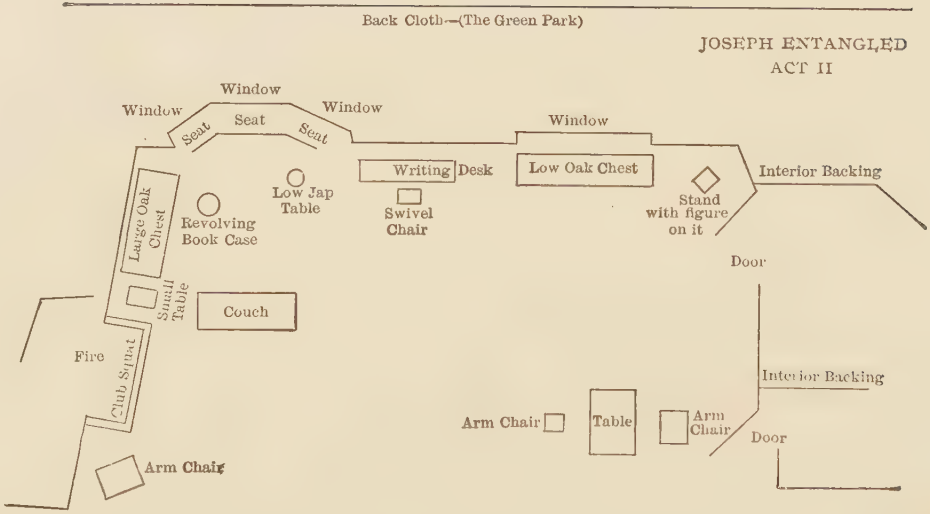
SIR J.

Quick, my good fellow, you've no time to lose!

[KNAPMAN *goes off* [1] *with the luggage ticket, looking very much perplexed at* SIR JOSEPH. SIR JOSEPH *again left alone, gets more impatient, walks to desk, takes up his hat, walks backwards and forwards, muttering,* "Oh, confound and curse the thing." *takes the clock down, puts it on table, shakes fist at it, picks it up, shakes it, puts it down again, walks to desk and picks up his stick, walks back again, muttering, stamping——*

[1] *At back.*

CURTAIN.


Back Cloth—(The Green Park)
JOSEPH ENTANGLED
ACT II
Window
Window
Window
Seat
Seat
Seat
Window
Writing Desk
Low Oak Chest
Interior Backing
Low Jap Table
Swivel Chair
Stand with figure on it
Large Oak Chest
Revolving Book Case
Small Table
Couch
Door
Fire
Club Settee
Interior Backing
Arm Chair
Table
Arm Chair
Door
Arm Chair

ACT II.

SCENE. SIR JOSEPH LACY'S *chambers. A handsome, well-furnished bachelor's apartment overlooking the Green Park. At back, right, a large turret window, with seat all round, forming a cosy corner; in the wall at back, left, another long low window. A writing-desk between the two windows; it is open, and contains a litter of papers, letters, accounts, etc. A revolving library chair in front of the desk. A fireplace, right, with fire burning in front of it; facing fire a cosy settee. A table, left, with chair on each side of it. A door up stage, left. A door down stage, left.*

Lights. Float full up. Lengths up at all entrances 2 amber lines O. P. P. S. shelves 4 lines on back cloth.

TIME: *An afternoon in late October.*

Discover SIR JOSEPH, *seated at desk,*[1] *looking over papers, smoking. Enter* STADDON.[2]

[1] C.

[2] *Upper door* L.

STADDON.[3]

I hope Mrs. Trabb had everything in order on your return, Sir Joseph?

[3] *Staddon has several newspapers in his hand. He closes door and comes to table* L.C. *arranging the newspapers on it.*

SIR J.

Yes, thank you, Staddon.

STAD.

I've arranged the library as you wished.

SIR J. [*Turns round on the library chair.*]

Then I suppose we may consider ourselves comfortably settled in, eh?

STAD.

Yes, I suppose, Sir Joseph. And if I may say so, I'm very glad to be back in our own quarters again.

[1] *Rises and goes to fireplace.*

SIR. J.[1]

So am I, Staddon. [*Looking at invitation cards.*] Lady Jervis—Mrs. Enderby——

STAD.

I beg pardon, Sir Joseph, you told me to remind you that you dine with Professor Tofield to-morrow night.

SIR J.

[2] *Goes up* C. *to desk.*

Ah, yes, and a damned dull time I'm going to have with his fogies. Very well, Staddon, we'll dine[2] with the Professor to-morrow night; [*making a note in engagement-book*] we'll tick him off and then we'll begin to enjoy ourselves.

STAD.

I beg pardon, Sir Joseph, but I suppose you intend to continue your Friday dinners?

[*Taking a cellar-book out of his pocket.*

SIR J.

[3] *Stad. goes up to him.*

Yes, of course, Staddon.[3]

STAD.

[4] *Giving Sir Joseph the book.*

Because if you'll look over the cellar-book,[4] you'll find we're getting a little short of some of our special wines.

[5] *Taking book.*

SIR J.[5]

Ninety-two Clicquot. Only six bottles. I wonder

if there's any more of that to be got. We must keep up our reputation, Staddon.

STAD.

Well, Sir Joseph, we've always managed to do so up to the present.

SIR J.

I think we have, Staddon.[1] I think we have![2] That reminds me: here are the invitations for the first two dinner parties.[3] And, Staddon, I'm thinking of giving a few little Sunday luncheons as well. I shall want your help to make them a success.

[1] *Sits at desk.*

[2] *Gives book back to Staddon.*

[3] *Giving Staddon about twenty addressed envelopes which have been lying on the writing-desk.*

STAD.

I think you may rely upon me, Sir Joseph.

SIR J.

I'm sure I may. Now I'm back in town I intend to see a good deal of my friends, and I intend my friends to see a good deal of me.

STAD.

I'm sure, Sir Joseph, all your friends will be very pleased so to do. Then we shall remain in town for the entire winter?

SIR. J.[4]

[4] *Rises.*

Yes, I think. After all, London's the only place fit to live in.[5]

[5] *Comes down* C. *and leans on back of chair* R. *of table.*

STAD.

Exactly the remark I was making to Mrs. Trabb this morning. I said, "London's good enough for me," I said; and I added "I trust I'm good enough for London;" and she replied, "I sincerely trust you are, Mr. Staddon."

SIR J.

A very excellent sentiment on the part of Mrs.

Trabb. Yes, very well, Staddon, I hope we shall prove ourselves worthy citizens of London town for the next few months. Post those invitations.[1]

[1] *Goes up to window.*

STAD.

Yes, Sir Joseph. [*Exit.*[2]

[2] *Lower door.*

[*Left alone* SIR JOSEPH *goes back to desk picks up from amongst the litter, the glove which he had taken from* LADY VERONA *in the first act, looks at it fondly, kisses it, takes up a letter from the desk, reads it.*

"MY DEAR JO,

"You need not trouble any further about our little adventure. It has quite blown over; and Hardolph, like a dear good sensible husband, has said nothing further about it. We got back to Saville Street last evening, and shall stay here till Christmas. When do you get back to town? Let us know, and come and dine with us some evening. But please say nothing to Hardolph about your breakfast in Saville Street, as if you mention it he might attach some importance to it.

"With kindest regards, [*Sighs.*]

"Your affectionate mother,

"VEE."

[*He kisses the letter; kisses the glove. He hastily puts letter in pocket and throws glove to desk; it misses desk and falls on the side, where it remains. He then goes down to settee, settles himself comfortably in it, and says half under his breath:*

SIR J.

That's all right, now I'm going to have a damned good time.

Enter STADDON,[1] *showing in* GERALD FANMERE, *a weak, amiable, fussy little man, about thirty.* STADDON *announces*—" Mr. Fanmere."

[*Exit* STADDON.[2]

[1] *Lower door.*

[2] *Lower door.*

SIR J. [*Advancing very cordially.*]

Ah, my dear Fanny! Delighted to see you! How's Lady Joyce?

FAN.

Joyce is in the country. I've wired her to come up about this wretched business.[3]

[3] *Crosses to* R.

SIR J.

Wretched business? !

FAN.

Now, my dear Jo, if anything is to be done, it must be done at once, before it's too late. Have you anything to propose?

SIR J.

With regard to what?

FAN.

It's useless to beat about the bush. Hardolph knows everything!

SIR J.

Yes, of course he does.

FAN.

Well?

SIR J.

Well? well? well? Like a sensible husband he's taking no notice of it.

FAN.

Taking no notice of it! He's raging like a madman.

SIR J.

What's he doing that for?

FAN.

Well wouldn't you, under the circumstances? I know I should. He's threatening every moment to go to Cattermoul.[1]

[1] *Gets on settee* R.

SIR J.

Who's Cattermoul?

FAN.

His lawyer.[2]

[2] *Drops into settee.*

SIR J.

Will you please tell me what has happened?

FAN.

The day before yesterday Jermyn Pyecroft was telling a couple of fellows the whole story in the smoking-room of the New Carlton; and just as he came to the spicy part of it——

SIR J.

Excuse me. What do [3] you call the spicy part?

[3] *Sits by him.*

FAN.

About your losing your luggage and begging a shake-down for the night.[4] Damned silly story that, Jo!

[4] *Leans back.*

SIR J.

You think so?

FAN.

Well, isn't it?

SIR J.

Go on.

FAN.

Well, all the time Hardolph was sitting in a big armchair with his back to them; and just as Pye-

croft came to the point where Harry Tavender gave you the tip that Hardolph was coming up from Scotland that morning——

SIR J.

Harry Tavender gave me the tip that——

FAN.

My dear Jo, you don't deny Tavender did give you the tip——

SIR J.

Go on.

FAN.

Just then, up jumps Hardolph from behind his paper and says, "Pyecroft, perhaps you'll be good enough to tell me the remainder of this story at my own house." Tableau!

SIR J.

But Lady Verona told Hardolph all about it directly she got down to Scotland——

[*Drawing* LADY VERONA'S *letter from his pocket*[1] *and glancing at it.*

[1] *Fan. rises and goes to* C.

FAN. [*Much annoyed.*]

My dear Jo, what is the use of telling me a silly tarradiddle like this? Hardolph knew nothing about it till the day before yesterday.

SIR J.[2]

[2] *Rises.*

Are you sure?

[*Glancing at* LADY VERONA'S *letter and putting it back in his pocket, puzzled.*

FAN. [*Getting more and more irritated.*]

Am I sure? Is it likely that Vee would tell him of her own account? Is it likely——[3]

[3] *Coming back to him* R. C.

SIR J.

But good heaven! Surely Mayne doesn't imagine that——

FAN.[1]

My dear Jo, this story is being repeated everywhere, all over the town——

[1] *Taps him in a quiet, friendly way on the shoulder.*

SIR J.

What![2]

[2] *Drops into settee.*

FAN.

So it's no use to play the innocent martyr. Everything's known. All you've got to do is to own up, and see whether we can pull poor Vee out of the fire.

SIR J.

Certainly Lady Verona must be saved at all costs. At all costs!

FAN.

Yes, I daresay! What are you going to do?

SIR J.[3]

[3] *Starting off to* L.

Do? Go straight across to Mayne to tell him not to make an ass of himself.

FAN.[4]

[4] *Stopping him. Fan. runs over* L. C. *after him.*

Are you mad? You mustn't go near him till I've smoothed things down.

SIR J.

Why not?

FAN.[5]

[5] *Brings Sir J. back to* C.

He's in a frantic state, pacing up and down the drawing-room like a caged tiger, swearing one moment he'll kill you, and the next that he'll take the whole matter to Cattermoul.

SIR J.

And Lady Verona?

FAN.

Vee's in just as desperate a state downstairs; de-

claring she's innocent; saying she'll leave Hardolph; going into hysterics. Oh, they're having some very high jinks in Saville Street to-day, I assure you.

SIR J.

But what are people saying?[1] Who started it? I suppose I may thank Harry Tavender and his wife for this——

[1] *Going to* R.

FAN.

You may thank yourself, my dear Jo, but the Tavenders have done their little best to get the story known everywhere.

SIR J.

But good heavens![2] It's monstrous! I——

[2] *Going back to* L. C.

Enter STADDON,[3] *showing in* PROFESSOR TOFIELD, *a stout, pompous, aggressive man of seventy-five, with large gold spectacles.* STADDON *announces*—" Professor Tofield."

[3] *Lower door, left.*

SIR. J.[4]

Ah, my dear uncle, one moment.[5] Staddon, I believe Mr. Tavender is on the telephone. Please ring him up and say I should be much obliged if he and Mrs. Tavender would come on here at once.

[4] *Standing down* L. C.

[5] *Tof. glares at Sir J. and goes to* C. *above Sir J. Tof. then stares at Fanmere and goes up* C. *taking off his gloves.*

STAD.

Yes, Sir Joseph. [*Exit* STADDON[6]

[6] *Lower door left.*

SIR J.

Now, my dear uncle, how d'ye do?

[*Offering hand, which* TOFIELD *will not see.*

TOF. [*Glaring at* SIR JOSEPH *through his spectacles.*]

I wish to have a word with you in private.—[7] How d'ye do, Mr. Fanmere?

[7] *Goes* R. *a little.*

FAN.

How d'ye do, Professor?[1]

[1] *Tofield continues to glare at Sir Joseph.*

SIR J.

I trust I've done nothing to upset you——

TOF.

No. I have arrived at a time of life when I will no longer allow my emotions to be played upon, and my digestion to be impaired by the spectacle of your follies and indiscretions.

SIR J.

I suppose you've heard this absurd story——

TOF.

I have heard a story which——

FAN.

Excuse me, Professor Tofield, but as this unfortunate affair concerns my wife's family, I've come here to try to arrange matters without a public scandal. Now, if the friends of both parties, such as you and I——

TOF. [*Glances at* SIR JOSEPH.]

Pardon me. In this matter I decline to be regarded in any sense as a friend of Sir Joseph's.[2]

[2] *Goes up* C. *places his hat on desk, and his umbrella by the side of it. Sir J. during following lines is* L. C.

FAN.

Yes. Of course we can't quite approve his conduct, but——

TOF. [*Majestically.*]

Approve his conduct?[3] Approve ——[*Glares at* SIR J.]

[3] *Comes down* C.

FAN.

That's what I say! His conduct has been [*looking*

at SIR JOSEPH] disgraceful! Very disgraceful! Still, there's a lady's reputation at stake——

TOF.

That is no responsibility of mine. If ladies wish to preserve their reputations they should take the very simple precaution not to place those reputations in circumstances where they will be at stake.

FAN.

Yes, yes, of course. But after all, you know, the question is, "Can we hush it up?"

TOF. [*Majestically.*]

Hush it up? ! Hush it up? ! Do I understand you, Mr. Fanmere, to ask me to betray the guiding principles of my whole career? [1]

[1] *Sir J. lights a cigarette.*

FAN.

No! No! Of course not. A—a—what are your guiding principles?

TOF.

When I accepted my present professorship I determined to make no truce with the organized system of conventional lying which supports and regulates English society. I determined to speak the truth on all occasions, with an absolute disregard of any pain or discomfort I might cause to those around me——[2]

[2] *Sir J. sits* R. *of table* L. C. *and smokes.*

FAN.

Very noble and courageous of you!

TOF.

I determined to make my office the means of bringing about some small relation between moral theory and personal practice in England. What has been the result? I say it with pride and exhilaration—I

have made enemies everywhere! My class-room is deserted! My windows have twice been gutted! And on one occasion I only avoided the indignity of a personal encounter by remaining indoors for two days!

FAN.

Very noble and courageous of you!

TOF.

And I assure you I have not come for the purpose of hushing it up!

[1] *Sir J. rises quickly and goes* C. *to Tof.*

SIR. J.[1]

Then, my dear uncle, will you please tell me what on earth you have come for?

TOF.

I have come in the first place to withdraw my invitation to you to dine with me to-morrow night—

SIR J. [*Eagerly takes up his engagement-book, and makes a mark.*]

[2] *Sits again.*

It's cancelled, my dear uncle! Please say no more.[2]

TOF.

I have a great deal more to say. This unhappy gentleman, Mr. Hardolph Mayne, is the son of one of my oldest friends. I had also invited him and Lady Verona to dine with me. In accordance with my well-known principles, I shall be obliged to withdraw my invitation to them——

SIR J.

[3] *Rises.*

Oh, my dear uncle![3] Withdraw your invitations to everybody! Give them all a night off! And give your principles a night off too! Let them have a little rest sometimes! I've got principles! We've all got principles! But, thank heaven, we don't make our neighbors uncomfortable by acting up to them!

TOF. [*Very angry.*]

Very well, sir! Very well! I have still a plain and painful duty to discharge to you in this matter. And if you——

Enter STADDON,[1] *announcing* "Mr. Jermyn Pyecroft." *Enter* JERMYN PYECROFT, *a tall, sleek, well-dressed, superior, affected person, about fifty; sharp-featured, a little bald; satirical, correct; a constant poseur. Exit* STADDON.

[1] *Lower door left.*

PYE.

Ah, my dear Joseph——

SIR J.

My dear Pyecroft. [*Shaking hands.*

PYE.

Fanmere, my salutations——

FAN.

How d'ye do?

[PYECROFT *looks at* TOFIELD *through eyeglass.* TOFIELD *grunts.*

SIR J. [*Introduces.*]

Mr. Jermyn Pyecroft. My uncle, Professor Tofield, Jobsonian Professor of Moral Philosophy.

PYE.[2]

[2] *Crossing to* R. C.

Professor, I greet you most cordially. I was glancing at your new volume yesterday, "The Relation of Theory to Practice in Modern Ethics" [TOFIELD *bows*]. I have never before encountered anyone who supposed there could be any relation between British theory and British practice in the sphere of morals.[3] Apropos of morals, my dear Joseph, I have come to make a little personal explanation. May I tear you from your friends for a moment? Unless you would prefer me to unburden my guilty soul in public?

[3] *Tofield grins and sits* R. *on settee.*

SIR J.

My dear Pyecroft, if you have come upon the same errand that has brought Mr. Fanmere and Professor Tofield, pray speak out.

PYE.

Then I will place myself in the pillory. I blame and scourge myself, my dear Joseph, for having been so foolish as to listen to a scandalous story connecting your name with that of a certain lady. I blame and scourge myself still more for having been so foolish as to repeat it, even in the sanctity of a club smoking-room. I blame and scourge and mortify myself in a still higher degree for not having ascertained that the lady's husband was screened behind a newspaper, and was listening to my artless prattle. I have no knowledge whatever of the facts of the case; but whatever they are I declare them to be utterly false, incredible, and highly mischievous to society; I triumphantly place the garter of "Honi soit qui mal y pense" upon my own knee, and upon the knee of any lady or gentleman who will tender it to me for that purpose. [TOFIELD *rises to make an indignant protest.*] I speak in metaphors, my dear Professor! A mere trope! A mere trope! [TOFIELD *seats himself.*] I draw no moral, my dear Joseph! I simply cover myself with confusion, and I offer the most abject apology to your injured self, to the injured lady, and to the injured husband. And now I trust you will allow me to withdraw from this affair with the assurance that my humble share in it will be totally pardoned and forgotten. Good-day——

[*Takes up hat, about to go.*

SIR J.

No, Pyecroft, I want you to tell me exactly what you heard and give me your authority.

Enter STADDON,[1] *showing in* MR. *and* MRS. TAVENDER.

STAD. [*Announces.*]

Mr. and Mrs. Tavender.

Exit STADDON.

The TAVENDERS *enter, looking most uncomfortable,*[2]

SIR J.

How d'ye do, Mrs. Tavender? [3]

MRS. T. [*Shaking hands.*]

How are you, Sir Joseph?

TAV.[4] [*With great assumed cordiality.*]

Ah, my dear Jo, how goes it!

SIR. J.[5]

How d'ye do, Harry?

TAV.

We got your message on the telephone, and of course we came on at once. [*Very uneasy.*] Anything—a—important?

SIR J.

Yes, Harry, most important. I find that a lady's name has been associated with mine in a cruel and false scandal.[6]

MRS. T.

Yes, we've heard something about it. But I hope you don't mean to infer that Harry and I have anything to do with it? [7]

SIR J.

I infer nothing; I find that this scandal is being repeated everywhere. It has become so general that it cannot be allowed to die a natural death. There

[1] *Lower door left.*

[2] *Tofield rises.*

[3] *Comes to* C., *Mrs. T. follows him.*

[4] L. C.

[5] C.

[6] *Mrs. T. goes to Tav., they exchange looks. Fanmere is down* R. *Tofield above him with his back to the fire.*

[7] *Sits down* R. *of table* L. C.

is nothing for me to do but to court the strictest inquiry, to bring every detail to light, to prove the lady's absolute innocence, and to silence anyone who dares to breathe the least word against her unsullied honor!

PYE.

Admirably put, my dear Joseph. And quite in the style of eloquence befitting these occasions.

TAV. [*Very uneasy.*]

My dear Jo, anything that Cissy and I can do to help you out of the hole—anything in this world, only too happy—but you know—eh?

SIR J. [*Sternly.*]

Will you please tell me exactly what you and Mrs. Tavender have been saying about myself and—a lady?

TAV. [*Uncomfortable.*]

[1] *Backs away to L.*

Well, I assure you—eh, Cissy? [1]

MRS. T.

I really take no interest in such affairs. I've scarcely mentioned it——

SIR J.

No, but when you have mentioned it, what have you said? Eh, Harry?

TAV.

Well, I assure you, Jo—we've always let you down gently, eh, Cissy?

SIR J.

[2] *Moves over to him.*

Let me down gently? [2] What do you mean?

TAV.

Well—you know, Jo, it isn't fair to corner me like this—eh, Cissy? [*Most uncomfortable.*

MRS. T.[1]

Oh, my dear Harry, if it's going to be made public I really can't and won't be mixed up in it.

SIR J.

Aren't you already a little mixed up in it?

MRS. T.

I suppose you think that Harry and I started this gossip. But if you wish to know who your friend really is I don't mind telling you——

TAV.

Now, Cissy, do take care——

MRS. T.

No, Harry, I cannot be accused of being a scandal-monger. [*To* SIR JOSEPH.] The person who has really spread all these dreadful tales is Mrs. Pakenham, who lives opposite to the Maynes in Saville Street. She was watching you and Lady Verona from her window.

SIR J.

Well——

MRS. T.

Well—I don't know what she saw, or what she didn't see, but if she saw half of what she says she saw—well, you'd better send for Mrs. Pakenham.

SIR J.

I will send for Mrs. Pakenham in her turn——

MRS. T.

Well, her turn comes before mine. [*Getting agitated.*] And I think before accusing old friends like Harry and me——

[1] *Rises.*

SIR J.

Excuse me. I have accused no one. I merely ask you and Tavender to help me to get at the truth.

MRS. T.

I really didn't notice what took place that morning. I was too much shocked and surprised. So it won't be the least use to call us for witnesses on either side, and if Randolph carries out his threat and gets a divorce——

SIR J.

[1] *Turns to Tav., who is on his r.*

Does Mayne speak of a divorce? [1]

TAV. [*Smiling in a silly, embarrassed way.*] Ye—es.

MRS. T.

Well, what else can he do? And the moment he brings his action we shall go abroad; we shall not allow our address to be known, and we shall stay there till it's all over. You'll forgive my speaking so plainly. Good-bye.[2] I really can't stay. I was just going on to a party when your message came. I haven't a moment. Harry, are you coming?

[2] *Mrs. T. shakes hands with Sir J. Tavender opens door l. stands l. c.*

TAV. [*Preparing to go.*]

You know, Jo, I don't see how I can be of much use—eh, old fellow? [3]

[3] *Gives Sir J. his hand. Sir J. takes Tav's hand and swings him round to c.*

SIR J.

You'd better stay, Harry. I shall want you to help me thrash this out. Mrs. Tavender, I'll see you to the door——

MRS. T. [*Going off.*]

Harry, do be careful and don't let your good nature run away with you. If you're wise you'll say exactly what I've said, and refuse to be drawn into it.[4] Oh, please don't trouble——

[4] *Sir J. moves as if to follow her.*

SIR J.

If you please——

[*Exeunt* SIR JOSEPH *and* MRS. TAVENDER.[1]

[1] *Lower door, left.*

TAV.

I say, this is pretty bad business, eh? Looks as if we were going to have a big wash of dirty linen, eh? Now we must all hang together and keep each other out of it, eh?[2]

[2] *Pyecroft moves to* R. C.

PYE.

I intend to extricate myself.

TAV.

Yes, Jermyn, you seem to have landed yourself in the thick of it. [*Laughing.*

PYE.

Joseph has just asked me for my authority.

TAV.

Eh? [*Anxiously.*] Well? Well?

PYE.

If I'm challenged, I fear I shall be obliged to name you as my child's guide to knowledge in this affair.

TAV.

What? Oh, I say! Oh come, Jermyn, you don't mean to give me away![3]

[3] *Pyecroft gives an amused shrug; turns up* C.

TAV.[4] [*Bursting out.*]

[4] *Goes* L.

It's too bad of Jo Lacy to drag all his friends into a confounded mess like this! If he wants to breakfast with a lady, why the deuce doesn't he take her —anywhere? Let him take her to Timbuctoo to breakfast! or Jericho. I don't care where he takes her so long as he keeps her out of my way.—Ah, Jo! [*as* SIR JOSEPH *re-enters.*][5]

[5] *Sir J closes door, looks at all the men present for a second and then crosses to* C. *standing facing all of them with his back to the audience.*

FAN.

Now, my dear Jo, I hope you thoroughly realize your position.

SIR J.

I'm beginning to.

FAN.

Then there's no need to rub it in.

SIR J.

Not a bit.

[1] *At fire. Fan. gets up* R. C. *a few steps.*

TOF.[1]

I am waiting to make an important communication to Sir Joseph. If he wishes I will retire into another room meantime.

SIR J.

No, pray stay, my dear uncle. I feel sure that if you can't help us, at least you'll be able to offer us a quantity of good advice.

TOF.

[2] *Seats himself. Pye sits* R. *of table* L. C. *Tavender sits on front edge of table.*

On that understanding I will remain; though at a very considerable loss of self-respect.[2]

FAN.

Now, I'm here as a friend of both parties, to see whether this can't be arranged. I've told Hardolph I feel sure you have some perfectly natural and innocent explanation of the circumstances.

SIR J.

So I have.

FAN.

Well, dear old boy, let's hear it then!

SIR J.

I was there by the merest accident. I'd lost my

luggage, my club was closed for cleaning, and I happened to be passing through Saville Street; Knapman the butler was leaning out of the window——

[*They all show amused incredulity.*

FAN.

Yes, dear boy, we know all about that. But you don't expect me to go back to Hardolph with that story, do you?

SIR J.

But it's the mere truth, I give you my word of honor as a gentleman——

TOF.[1]

[1] *Rises.*

I never allow the phrases, "word of honor," "man of honor," to pass current in my presence. Were I in the position in which you have placed this unhappy gentleman——

SIR J.

What?!

TOF.

A contingency that would have been incredible, impossible, with either of my wives[2]—my successive wives—but had I any suspicion that I was an injured husband, the mere fact that I was offered a denial on "the word of honor of a gentleman" would go far to assure me that my misfortune was accomplished. [*In a loud aside to* TAVENDER, *who is next to him.*] "Word of honor of a gentleman!" The utterly discredited and discreditable formula of every plausible scamp.

[2] *They all start and look at Tof.*

[*Glaring at* SIR JOSEPH.

SIR J.

That may be, my dear uncle! But I give you my word of honor as a gentleman that Lady Verona is innocent! [*He looks round, they just glance at*

each other and show incredulity.] Entirely innocent in word and deed and thought! [*Pause; he again looks round; they still maintain the same air of quiet cold incredulity.*] Fanny! Pyecroft, I'm not saying this because it's considered the proper thing to do! I'm simply speaking the plain truth. She's innocent. My most sacred word of honor! I swear it on any oath you like to put to me! By everything that I hold dear.[1] You don't believe me?

[1] *Sir J. from the time he has entered has been standing with his back to audience nearly all the time. He has only moved his head a little from one person to the other. When he gets to the lines "I swear it on any oath you put to me," he half turns and only faces audience when he says to Pyecroft, "You don't believe me."*

PYE.

My dear Joseph, of course we accept your assurance as a man of honor. What else could we expect from a man of honor? What less could a man of honor give! But having accepted your word of honor as a man of honor, the facts remain the same. You do not gainsay that you were discovered breakfasting with Lady Verona?

SIR J.

No.

PYE.

You had arrived at Saville Street the previous evening?

SIR J.

Yes.

PYE.

Having lost your luggage.

TOF.

Bah!

PYE.

You did what is usual in such circumstances, you begged a bed from a friend's butler?

SIR J.

Yes.

PYE.

Unfortunately Lady Verona had arrived at Saville Street the same evening?

SIR J.

Yes.

PYE.

Having omitted to mention these facts to our friend Hardolph, he is naturally inclined to place a somewhat harsh construction on them.

FAN.

Yes. It puts me in such a damned silly, awkward position. Now, Jo, can't you give me some explanation that will—will—will——

SIR J.

Will what?

FAN.

Well, put things right and get us all out of this infernal muddle that you've got us into? [*taking out watch.*] Hardolph's waiting for my return. What shall I tell him from you? [*Pause.*]

SIR J.

Tell him I give him my word of honor that Lady Verona is innocent.

[*They all express dissatisfaction.*

FAN.

Yes! And off he goes to Cattermoul and starts an tion for divorce. What then?

SIR J. [*Very calmly.*]

[*Looks at others.*] Tell him to go to Cattermoul. And start his action for divorce. And win his action for divorce.[1]

[*Sits and very calmly lights a cigarette.*[1] FANMERE *looks at* SIR JOSEPH; *looks all round at the others; makes a helpless, despairing gesture.*

[1] *Crosses to settee C.*

TAV. [*Sympathetically.*]

Yes, it's a nasty bit of business for all of us.[1] Well, Jo, old fellow, hope you'll come out of it smiling! I don't see that I can be of much further use—so I'll toddle![2]

[1] *Rises.*

[2] *Going L.*

[3] *Crosses to L. C.*

FAN.[3]

No, Harry, I told Hardolph I'd bring you round to Saville Street with me.

TAV.

Dear boy—what for? What can I do?

FAN.

Hardolph wants to question you about the whole matter. Now, my dear Harry, if you'll tell him that from their manner that morning you're quite sure that Lady Vee and Jo are innocent——

TAV.

Eh? Oh no, Fanny. Anything to help a friend—but that's too large an order—oh no.

FAN.

But my dear Harry, if you don't we're all up a tree——[4]

[4] *Coming down C. a little.*

TOF. [*Shaking his head vigorously.*]

I cannot allow——

FAN.

Yes, yes, Professor!

TOF.

I say I cannot allow——

FAN.

Yes, Professor: your opinions do you very great honor, but we're trying to save a lady's reputation, and it's a case where the truth may be stretched a little. [*Looking to* PYECROFT.

PYE.

In the case of a lady's reputation, what is the truth made for—except to be stretched.[1] Alas, that it should sometimes snap![2]

FAN.

Now, Harry, you must come on with me.

TAV. [*Very miserable.*]

Well—all right—I'll come—but I shall make an awful mess of it.

FAN.

You mustn't make a mess of it. I'll back you up. [*Looks at* SIR JOSEPH.] I'll tell Hardolph that from Sir Joseph's manner this afternoon, I'm sure he's innocent.

TAV.

But I shall feel such a silly idiot! Tell a man to his face when you find his wife breakfasting with Jo Lacy out of the season—tell him there's nothing in it!

FAN.

Keep on repeating to yourself that there *is* nothing in it; [*looking at* SIR JOSEPH, *who is sitting in the settee*] that he really is innocent. You can persuade yourself of anything, if you only say it often enough.[3] Now fix your mind on his innocence! [*Looking at* SIR JOSEPH, *who sits smoking.*][4] Hang it, Jo, it's too bad! It's really too bad!

SIR J.

What is?[5]

FAN.

Well, here is a lady's reputation in your hands; here is her husband, in a state of jealousy bordering on madness, waiting to know if I can offer any explanation on your behalf; here is your uncle To-

[1] *Tof. goes up* C. *again.*

[2] *Goes up to desk.*

[3] *Turns* TAV. *round to face Sir J.*

[4] *Going over to Sir J.*

[5] *Pyecroft sits by desk.*

field: your good friend Harry; your good friend Pyecroft: and myself, all waiting to help you out of the mess, and you sit there calmly smoking—hang it, Jo, what are you going to do?

SIR J.

My dear Fanny, do you think I don't know the recognized code of honor in these cases? Do you think I sha'n't act up to it? Do you think I sha'n't fight to my last breath, my last ha'penny, my last truth, my last lie to save her? And if that fails do you think I shall desert her? Lady Verona's reputation is in my hands, you say—will you be good enough to leave it there?

FAN.

[1] *Crosses behind Harry to* L. Oh, very well. Come on, Harry![1]

TAV.

Anything I can do—only too pleased—but—if ever I—of all the—Ta ta, Jo—Ta ta, Jermyn—I call it blackguardly—I know I shall put my foot in it, and——

[2] *Lower door, left.* [*Exit muttering.*[2]

FAN.

Pretty job I've got in front of me—to go and tell Hardolph—[*Turns and looks disgusted at* SIR JOSEPH.][3]

[3] *Sir J. rises, and while Fan. speaks glowers at him, &c.*

[*Exit* FANMERE *after* TAVENDER.[4]

[4] *Sir Joseph sees Pyecroft coming down to him.*

PYE.[5]

[5] *Bell heard off* R.

My dear Joseph, may I offer you my pouncet-box in the midst of this carnage?

SIR J.

Certainly.

PYE.

Why not go abroad and allow matters to cool down?

I was dining with Sir Edward last night, and it seems that the governorship of our new Pacific group is vacant. I know of no person so competent to govern Pacific Islanders as yourself. Shall I call on Sir Edward and suggest you for the post? Doesn't that offer a way out of the difficulty?

SIR J.

I think not. If I sneak away that will be tantamount to acknowledging the truth of this slander. And she'll have to stay and bear the brunt of it alone. No, I mustn't run away!

PYE.

Do you think you'll serve her interests, her reputation, by staying in England?

SIR J.

I think so.

PYE. [*With a little shrug.*]

Then, my dear Joseph, adieu.[1] I trust I have done all that friendship requires of me?

[1] *Sir J. rings bell. Pye. goes* L. C. *Bell as before.*

SIR J.

Yes. Good-bye.[2]

[2] *Going* C.

[PYECROFT *is going.*

SIR J.

Pyecroft! [PYECROFT *stops.*] *Perhaps after all* you're right—What terms are you on with Mayne since——

PYE.

Since the club smoking-room? My dear Joseph, I never allow any man to be on bad terms with me. I framed a winsome apology to poor Hardolph, and I now appear to him as a beatific bachelor, anxious only to inaugurate a millennium of conjugal peace. Can I be of any service?

SIR J.

I don't know how this may turn out. It might be a friendly thing to me—and to her—if you'd find out from Mayne whether my absence abroad for some months would allow this to blow over?

PYE.

I'll go over to Saville Street and gently intimate the same——[1]

[1] *Goes to door.*

SIR J.

You won't commit me—or her—in any way?

PYE.

Certainly not. It shall be the obvious suggestion of the disinterested bachelor.

SIR J.

Thanks. And you'll let me know?

PYE.

As soon as I've seen him.[2]

[2] *Opens door and stops.*

SIR J.

Pyecroft, she's straight——

PYE.

My dear Joseph, the alternative is unthinkable.

[3] *Lower door left.*

[*Exit* PYECROFT.[3] TOFIELD *at window makes a start and an exclamation of surprise, comes down and glares at* SIR JOSEPH *through his spectacles.*

SIR J.

Anything the matter? [TOFIELD *stands glaring at* SIR JOSEPH, *and points with his thumb to the window which he has just left.* SIR JOSEPH *goes hurriedly up to the window, looks out, comes back puzzled.*[4] TOFIELD *remains speechless, glaring*

[4] *Down* R. C.

ferociously at SIR JOSEPH *through his spectacles.*] What is it? What has happened? [TOFIELD *makes an effort to speak, but remains speechless.*] My dear uncle, you seem to be laboring under some extraordinary difficulty. [TOFIELD *gathers up all his forces for a tremendous explosion.*] Will you please tell me what has disturbed you?

TOF. [*Exploding.*]

Lady—just stepped out of cab—entered your door——

SIR J.

Lady?!

TOF.

Yes. I came here prepared to give you my opinion of your conduct in no measured terms.

SIR J.

Proceed, my dear uncle! Proceed!

TOF.

No, I will forbear to tax my somewhat enfeebled organs; I will refrain from useless expostulation——

SIR J.

Thank you, very much![1]

[1] *Goes to* R.

TOF.

I will content myself by stating that I leave the whole of my late wife's fortune to moral and philanthropic institutions. And I have now the satisfaction of wishing you a final adieu.

SIR J.

Good-day, my dear uncle. Good-day.

[*Rings bell.*[2] TOFIELD *goes up to desk to get his hat, which he has left there. In coming back he kicks against* LADY VE-

[2] *Bell as before,* R.

RONA'S *glove at corner of desk. He stoops, picks it up, handles it very gingerly, looks at it very suspiciously. As he does so the handle of the upper door, left, is turned, the door opens,* LADY VERONA *just puts her head in, catches sight of* TOFIELD, *utters a little scream, withdraws, and closes door.* SIR JOSEPH *shows surprise and confusion.*[0] TOFIELD *grows redder and more angry, and goes off* [1] SIR JOSEPH *watches him off, then goes to upper door left, opens it.*

[0] *Sir J. places his cigar on ash tray* R.

[1] *Lower door left.*

LADY V.[2]

Are you alone?

SIR J.

Yes.[3]

[2] *Putting her head round upper door*

[3] *She enters and goes down* R. C.

SIR J.

I'm delighted you've come, but aren't you fearfully imprudent? [4]

[4] *Goes down to her.*

LADY V.

Yes—I can't help that. I asked your man to show me in there till they'd gone.

SIR J.

You haven't—left Hardolph?

LADY V.

No—though I think he means to drive me to it.

SIR J.

Ah! [*Approaching her.*

LADY V.

No![5] please don't be foolish. [*Looks round very nervously.*] You're quite sure we're alone?

[5] *Crosses him to* C.

SIR J.

Yes—don't be afraid. Tell me what has brought you here.

LADY V.

I couldn't bear the suspense any longer. I've had two awful days.[1] I felt I must throw myself over the precipice rather than endure another hour's torture. Why haven't you answered my letters?

[1] *Sits* R. *of table* L. C.

SIR J.

Letters?

LADY V.

I've written you twice since this happened.

SIR J.

The last letter I had from you reached me at Milan a fortnight ago. [*Drawing it from his pocket.*] I answered it at once.

LADY V.

You didn't get a letter yesterday, and the night before?

SIR J.

Not a scrap.

LADY V.

[*Frightened.*] Then[2] what has become of them? If they should have fallen into my husband's hands! Oh!

[2] *Rises and crosses to* R.

SIR J.

What did you say in the letters?

LADY V.

I can't quite remember. I'm trying to think——

SIR J.

Were they—very tender?

LADY V.

Tender! No![3] How can you suppose I should write anything tender to you—especially just now?

[3] *Lady V. sits on settee* R.

SIR J.

Then why should it matter if they fell into your husband's hands?

LADY V.

Because—because I appealed to you to come and save me——

SIR J.

Ah! [*Approaching her tenderly.*

LADY V.

No—no, do keep away from me, please. And my letters might be taken for the appeal of a guilty woman—Oh!

SIR J.

Don't be alarmed! You know that I'm entirely at your service. [*Again approaching her very*[1] *tenderly.*] Tell me what you wish me to do!

[1] *Takes her hand which is resting on arm of settee.*

LADY V.

I wish you not to make love to me. That was Professor Tofield who left here just now?

SIR J.

Yes.

LADY V.

He's a friend of my husband. We dine with him to-morrow night—if ever we dine with anybody any more.

SIR J.

I wouldn't fret about losing the Professor's dinner —or his acquaintance.[2]

[2] *Sits on arm of settee.*

LADY V.

I don't. But as I was getting out of the cab just now Mr. Jermyn Pyecroft was coming out of the door—of course my first impulse was not to see

him; well he saw through that, and then of course I had to recognize him and bow; then my next impulse was to pretend that I was going to Lady George's next door—well he saw through that too; so I had to face it out and come in here, and I know I looked quite guilty: that's the worst of this; I begin to feel quite guilty—and of course Pyecroft thinks——

SIR J.[0]

[0] *Rising.*

I wouldn't fret about Pyecroft. He's a man of the world, and he's used to this sort of thing.

LADY V.

Used to what sort of thing?! I'm not used to it. [*Suddenly bursting into reproaches.*] Oh, you have placed me in a terrible position. Terrible! Terrible! Terrible!

SIR. J. [*Again approaching her very tenderly.*] [1]

[1] *Leaning over back of settee.*

I can't tell you how sorry I am. But I'm glad you've come to me in your distress. [*Getting very tender.*] You may be quite sure that whatever happens I shall stick to you through——

LADY V. [*Repulsing him.*]

No! no! That's just what I don't want you to do, unless—unless——

SIR J.

Unless what?

LADY V.

Well, of course if things come to the worst, then it would be very kind of you to——

SIR J. [*Trying to clasp her.*]

You may be sure I will.

LADY V. [*Repulsing him.*]

No! No! You are not to make love to me——

SIR J.

I won't [*Again approaching her very tenderly.*] But come now, Vee, put yourself entirely in my hands——

LADY V.

But you are making love to me——

SIR J.

No, no, I'm not. I assure you I'm not. Tell me, how can I put things right?

LADY V.

Well, how can you? [*Again looks at him and bursts out again into reproaches.*] [1] Why did you ask Knapman to put you up for the night? Why didn't you go to a club, or to an hotel, or anywhere, rather than come and stay in the very house where I was? [2]

[1] *Rises, crosses to up* C. *Sir J. remains by back of seat.*

[2] *Comes down* C. *and leans over back of chair* R. *of table* L. C.

SIR J.

It was senseless of me.[3] I deserve to be whipped. But why didn't you tell Hardolph all about it? You promised you would.

[3] *Moves* C. *to her.*

LADY V.

I promised I would at the first suitable opportunity.

SIR J.

Well?

LADY V.

Well, I never got a suitable opportunity.[4]

[4] *Sits in chair by table.*

SIR J. [*Drawing letter from pocket.*]

But you say in this letter [*reading*]: "Hardolph, like a dear good sensible husband has said nothing further about it."

LADY V.[5]

Well, that's quite true. If he didn't know any-

[5] *Lady V. rises crosses to* R. C. *and stands behind settee.*

thing about it he couldn't say anything about it. Could he?

SIR. J.[1]

Then you never told him?[2]

LADY V.

Oh, please don't you begin to reproach me! It was quite impossible for me to tell him.

SIR J.

Why?

LADY V.

Well—you know I told you that I always keep a birch rod for Hardolph when he's impossible.

SIR J.

Yes—well?

LADY V.

You are my birch rod. [SIR J. *is much puzzled.*]

SIR J.

I don't understand.

LADY V.

It's pretty generally known that—well, that you have been devotedly attached to me for a long while.

SIR J. [*Again approaching her very tenderly.*]

That's true!

LADY V. [*Again putting him away.*]

Well, you can't blame a woman if she takes advantage of a thing like that?

SIR J.

How?

LADY V.

Whenever Hardolph has been unusually horrid I've

[1] *Putting letter back in pocket.*

[2] *In a tone of reproach, goes up a step.*

always told him that if he didn't appreciate me, you did.

SIR J. [*Goes to her quickly.*]

Quite true! [*Delighted.*] Serve him right!

LADY V.

And just before I left for Oxfordshire we had a very great tiff, and he became so utterly unbearable that at last I lost my temper and told him you were dying to take me off his hands!

SIR J. *overjoyed.*

What? Well, of course that settles the whole matter.[1]

[1] *Going to her L.*

[*Attempting to embrace her.*]

LADY V.

No, no, I didn't mean it——

SIR J.

But you must mean it. Try to realize your position, dear. Through no fault of yours and mine everybody believes us guilty. Whatever I do, whatever I say, even if you pacify Hardolph, there will always be a suspicion attaching to us——

LADY V.

Oh, don't say that! It's horrible!

SIR J.

Would it be so very horrible to trust your life to the care of the man who has always loved you, who never loved you so devotedly as now——

LADY V.

Oh I couldn't! I couldn't! Jo, you must do something!

SIR J.

What? All the afternoon I've been trying to defend you—I've given my word of honor, my oath —they wouldn't believe me. But while they were buzzing round me with their little sneers, I kept on thinking, I kept on hoping—yes, I do hope it! I'm glad of it! I kept on saying to myself, "Suppose I can't prove her innocent. Suppose she must come to me! Suppose I can't save her!" [1]

[1] *Gets nearer to her.*

LADY V.[2]

[2] *Rises.*

Jo, you don't want to save me! You don't mean to save me!

SIR J.

You shouldn't say that. Tell me what you would do if you were in my place?

LADY V. [*Desperate.*]

Oh, I don't know![3] If I were a man I would find out some way to save the woman I loved![4]

[*Bursts into tears.*]

[3] *Goes up* C. *to desk.*

[4] *Drops into chair by desk.*

SIR J. [*Looks at her a moment, then goes to her, takes her hand away from her face.*]

Vee, dear! I will try! I'll be perfectly loyal to you. Believe me I will! On my honor, on my love for you, the only thing left that's sacred to me, I'll do something—everything that can be done! I'll leave no stone unturned. Trust me.

LADY V.

Thank you,[5] thank you with all my heart.[6]

[5] *Rises.*

[6] *He brings her down* C. *on her* R.

SIR J.

Now let's set to work. What's Hardolph doing?

LADY V.

Threatening all sorts of things—threatening to kill you, threatening to kill me.

SIR J.

What?

LADY V.

Don't be alarmed, of course he doesn't mean it—threatening to go to Cattermoul——

SIR J.

Does he know you've come here?

LADY V.

No. I've not seen him since last evening.

SIR J.

You must go back to him, tell him you've been here to see me, and say that I'm coming on to give him a clear and truthful account of the whole affair.

LADY V.

Will that be the best thing to do?

SIR J.

It's the only thing to do, at present.

LADY V.

But he's in a terrible state—or he was last evening.

SIR J.

[1] *Goes* R. You mustn't be afraid of him——[1]

LADY V.

I won't——

SIR J.

[2] *Rings bell and comes* C. *Bell as before.* I'll put you in a cab——[2]

LADY V.

No—let your man see me to the door—Oh!

[3] *Sir J. takes her hand.*

SIR J.[3]

Courage—courage.

Enter STADDON,[1] *with two letters on tray.*[2]

STAD.

I beg pardon, Sir Joseph, these letters arrived yesterday before your return. Mrs. Trabb happened to take them in downstairs and they got behind some things on her dresser. She hopes you'll excuse her——

SIR J. [*Has taken letters.*]

Your two missing letters——

LADY V.[3]

I'm glad they're safe. Yes, give them to me—there's nothing in them. [*He gives her the letters.*[4] *She puts them in her pocket.*

SIR J.

The door, Staddon, and my hat and gloves.

[*Exit* STADDON.[5]

LADY V.

You think I'd better see Hardolph before you come?

SIR J.

By all means. Whatever you do, don't seem afraid of him.

LADY V.

I'm not—only——

SIR J.

Be perfectly calm and courageous.

LADY V.

I will—only, dear man, he'll need some handling!

[*With a little shiver.*]

SIR J.

Well then, handle him, dear man, handle him!

[1] *Lower door, left.*

[2] *Comes to* L. C. *Lady V. goes up* C. *Sir J. moves* C. *to Staddon.*

[3] *Coming down* R. C. *and holding out her hand for them.*

[4] *After a moment's hesitation.*

[5] *Lower door left.*

[*Taking her hand.*] Handle him very delicately and firmly. Perhaps a little good-natured chaff? Eh?

LADY V.

Chaff?

SIR J.

Yes—chaff him out of it.

LADY V. [*Dubiously.*]

I'll try—but——

SIR J.

I'll come on and help you.

LADY V.

You won't be long?

SIR J.

I'll be round in half an hour.

LADY V.

Jo, I trust you thoroughly.

SIR J.

You may.

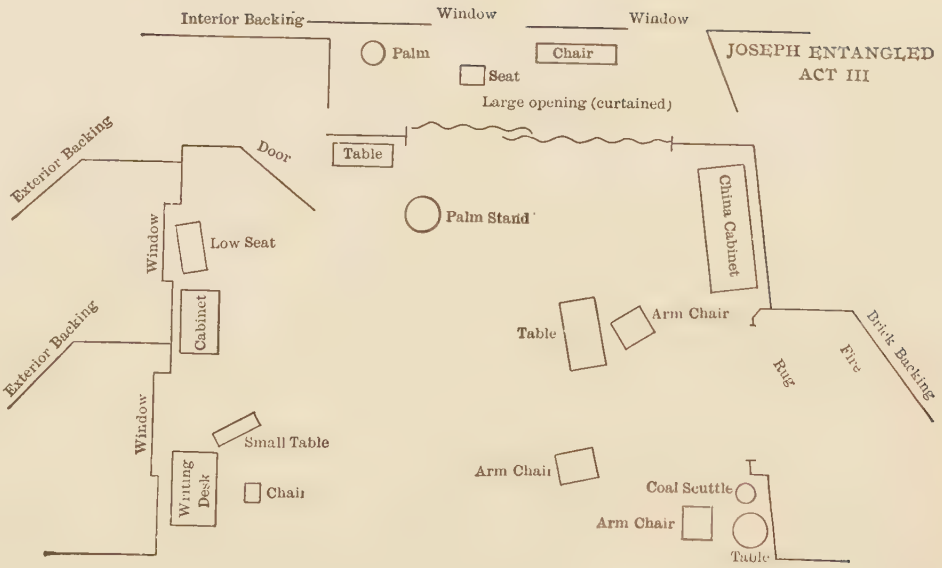
LADY V.

[*Going off.*] In half an hour?

SIR J.

In half an hour!

QUICK CURTAIN.


Interior Backing
Window
Window
Palm
Chair
Seat
JOSEPH ENTANGLED
ACT III
Large opening (curtained)
Exterior Backing
Door
Table
Palm Stand
China Cabinet
Window
Low Seat
Cabinet
Exterior Backing
Table
Arm Chair
Drink Backing
Rug
Fire
Window
Small Table
Writing Desk
Chair
Arm Chair
Coal Scuttle
Arm Chair
Table

ACT III.

SCENE.—*The back drawing-room at* MR. HARDOLPH MAYNE'S, *Saville Street. A handsomely furnished room in the same house as Act I. On the left a large fireplace with fire burning. On the back up right a door. Along left at back velvet shutting off the front drawing-room. A small space of wall between the door and curtains.*

Discover HARDOLPH MAYNE *pacing up and down the room.* KNAPMAN *and* MRS. KNAPMAN *are standing in a constrained, uncomfortable attitude.*[1]

[1] *Mrs. K. R. C. Knapman Mayne at fireplace.*

MAYNE.

Now I ask you once more—You heard me tell Mr. and Mrs. Tavender that I'd telegraphed to her ladyship to come up from Oxfordshire and lunch with me that day?

KNAP.

I believe you did mention something about it, sir—eh, Eliza?

MAYNE.

Then why didn't you tell me that her ladyship was in town, and that she had stayed the night here? [*Pause.*] Why don't you answer me?

KNAP.

Well sir, I've been with you now over four years, and I hope I've always given satisfaction——

MAYNE. [*With an impatient gesture.*]

Why didn't you tell me that her ladyship had left the house only a few minutes before?

KNAP. [*Very uncomfortable.*]

Well—— [*Appeals to* MRS. KNAPMAN.] Eliza—

MRS. K.

Your memory again, Knapman.

KNAP.

That's the only way I can account for it——

MAYNE.

You tell me that—— Now, for the last time, will you tell me the truth, or must I send for Mr. Cattermoul to get it out of you? [*Pause.*] Which is it to be?

KNAP.

Well, sir, I put it to you, supposing you had been placed in our circumstances——

MAYNE.

What circumstances?

KNAP.

The circumstances in which we then found ourselves placed.

MAYNE.

But—— [*Frantic gesture, calms himself.*] Will you tell me what the circumstances were?

KNAP.

Well, sir, on the one hand there was yourself, sir, and your happiness and all the consequences that were entailed——

MAYNE.

Go on—well?

KNAP.

On the other hand there was her ladyship and her ladyship's family and position——

MAYNE.

Well? Well?

KNAP.

On the third hand there was Sir Joseph; and having lived in his family for fifteen years [*an angry gesture from* MAYNE]—not that I wish to defend him in the least, sir. Eliza knows, and Heaven knows, that if I'd had the least suspicion anything was wrong——

MAYNE. [*Maddened.*]

What do you mean?

KNAP.

Well, sir, as I say, on the one hand there was yourself and my duty towards you; on the other hand there was her ladyship and Sir Joseph, and all I can assure you, sir, is that I was actuated solely by a desire to spare your feelings——

MAYNE. [*Angrily.*]

My feelings! What business have you to consider my feelings?

KNAP.

Well, sir, I did consider them. I hope I was right in so doing. I talked it over with Mrs. Knapman—— [*Glancing at* MRS. KNAPMAN.

MAYNE.

Talked what over?

KNAP.

What we've now been talking about, sir.

MAYNE.

Mrs. Knapman, will you please tell me what you know about this? [1]

[1] *Mrs. K. crosses to* C.

MRS. K.

Oh, if you please, sir, I'd rather not mention anything that would perpetrate against her ladyship; a better or kinder mistress never lived, though liable to the temptation of her sect, the same as all of us——

MAYNE.

Will you answer my question? When her ladyship arrived in town what did she say to you?

MRS. K. [*With slow, constrained manner as of an unwilling witness.*]

After Lady Joyce had gone, her ladyship said, "I shall want some breakfast in the morning."

MAYNE.

What did you say?

MRS. K.

I said, "Yes, my lady. Would you prefer a sole or ham and eggs"—oh sir, she's more sinned against than sinning.

[2] *Furious gesture.*

MAYNE.[2]

Will you please tell me what her ladyship said?

MRS. K.

She said, "A sole will do," or words to that effect.

[3] *Moves down* L. C.

MAYNE.[3]

What else?

MRS. K.

[4] *Mayne turns to her.*

Well, sir, when her ladyship asked me not to mention that she was in town——[4]

MAYNE.

Her ladyship asked you not to mention she was in town! Why didn't you tell me that before?

MRS. K.

Well, sir, Knapman and me thought it wouldn't be judicious.

MAYNE.

Judicious!—Good heaven!

MRS. K.

And also Mr. Tavender advised us to say nothing about it.

MAYNE.

Mr. Tavender advised you——

Enter FOOTMAN *at door.*[1]

[1] *The Knapmans move a little to* R. C.

FOOTMAN.

If you please, sir, Mr. Fanmere and Mr. Tavender are here. I've shown them into the drawing-room. [*Indicating curtains.*

FANMERE *enters through curtains, followed by* TAVENDER.

FAN.[2]

[2] *The footman exit* R. *The Knapmans get* R.

My dear Hardolph, we were shown into the next room, and we couldn't help overhearing——

TAV.

[*Who has followed* FANMERE.]

How d'ye do, Hardolph?[3]

[3] *Comes down* C. *cautiously and fearfully.*

MAYNE.

Harry, did you advise my servants to—to say nothing about this business?

TAV.

[1] *Tav. glares at Mrs. K.*

What? [1] My dear Hardolph!

MRS. K.

Oh sir, I asked you that very morning whether Knapman and me ought to hold our tongues, and you said "Certainly——"

TAV.

Well, of all the infernal—what next in the name of all that's—well—I——

MRS. K.

Oh sir, don't go back on her poor ladyship now she's in misfortune. I can testify anywhere, before anybody——

MAYNE. [*Interrupting.*]

Yes—yes. [*Waves the* KNAPMANS *to go off.*] I'll see you both later.

MRS. K.

I can testify anywhere that Knapman and me have said nothing but what was truthful—under the circumstances.[2] [*Exit.*[3]

[2] *She goes up to door* R. *followed by Knapman.*

KNAP.

[3] R.

I trust I've always done my duty to the family, and I trust I always shall. [*Exit.*[4]

[4] R.

TAV.

That's a pretty lying couple you've got there, Hardolph——

MAYNE.[5]

[5] *Fan. and Tav. come down* C.

Yes, I've got a pretty set of friends and servants altogether, haven't I? [6]

[6] *Crosses to* R.

TAV.

You don't believe what that woman says about my telling her to hold her tongue!

MAYNE.

I believe nothing! I believe nobody! You all saw this thing going on, and not one of you had the courage and the kindness to give me a hint, and open my eyes! And you call yourselves my friends!

FAN.

I've been trying all the afternoon to get at the truth——

MAYNE.

Truth! [1]

[1] *Goes up* R.

FAN. [*With a soothing gesture.*]

Now, my dear Hardolph, if you'll only be calm and listen to what I have to say—— [2]

[2] *Fan. follows Mayne up a little.*

MAYNE.

Well—go on—have you got at the truth? [3]

[3] *They come down* R. C. *again.*

FAN.

Well, I hope so. I've questioned Jo Lacy very closely and——

MAYNE.

Well?

FAN.

I was watching him all the while, Harry was watching him, too——

[*Appealing to* TAVENDER [4] *to back him up;* TAVENDER *gets more and more uncomfortable.*

[4] *Tavender is* C.

MAYNE.

Yes? Yes? Yes?

FAN.

Now, my dear Hardolph, you know you aren't quite in a fit state to judge of this, you're too excited——

MAYNE.

Tell me what you have found out!

FAN.

Well, from Jo Lacy's manner, after a—after a good deal of thinking it over—Harry and I have come to the conclusion that the whole thing is a mistake;[1] and there's absolutely nothing in it.

[1] *Tav. nods approvingly.*

MAYNE.

What questions did you put? What does he say?

FAN.

He gives you his word of honor——

MAYNE.

His word of honor![2]—what the devil do I care for his word of honor?

[2] *Goes down* R.

FAN.

Now, my dear Hardolph——

[*Trying to soothe him.*

MAYNE.

Will nobody give me a plain answer? Will nobody tell me to my face what a fool I've been?[3] Harry, how long has this been going on? How long have you known of it?

[3] *Crossing* C. *to Tavender.*

TAV.

My dear boy——

MAYNE.

Will you have the kindness to tell me exactly what you saw that morning?

TAV. [*Lamely.*]

My dear boy, I assure you——

MAYNE. [*Makes an impatient gesture.*]

No—no—tell me what you saw!

TAV.

Nothing, my dear boy! nothing at all! Cissy and I came into the morning-room downstairs; Jo Lacy and Vee happened to be there——

MAYNE.

At breakfast?

TAV.

Yes—[*Getting more and more uncomfortable—* FANMERE *encourages him by signs.*] Yes—I believe they were at breakfast—and upon my word, Hardolph, I assure you, my dear fellow——

MAYNE.

"You assure me"—what?

TAV.

Well—a—[*Encouraged by signs from* FANMERE, *makes a bold plunge.*] Judging from Jo Lacy's and Vee's manner, it struck me as a perfectly natural innocent sort of thing, you know.

MAYNE.

What struck you as a perfectly natural innocent sort of thing?

TAV. [*Getting still further out of his depth.*]

Well—a—the whole affair. I said so to Cissy at the time.

MAYNE.

What did you say to Cissy?

TAV. [*Getting more and more uncomfortable.*]

I said Jo and Vee seem to be—a—getting on—a—very comfortably——

MAYNE.

What?!

TAV.

I can't give you the exact words, but I said—Jo and Vee happen to have run up against each other—out of the season—" Very natural thing," I said; and Cissy said, " Oh, quite natural "; and I said, " You can tell from their manner there's nothing in it," and Cissy said, " Yes, if it weren't for their manner I should have thought it rather a curious coincidence——"

MAYNE.

Curious coincidence!

TAV.

Yes, and I said, " Oh no, oh no, it's—it's perfectly natural and innocent." [1]

[1] *Mayne glares at Tavender who nods and smiles in a feeble sickly way.*

MAYNE.

That Jo Lacy and my wife should arrive at my house late one night, and that they should be breakfasting tête-à-tête the next morning. That struck you as a perfectly natural and innocent sort of thing, eh?

TAV. [*Most uncomfortable.*]

Yes—a—nothing extraordinary—eh Fanny? [2]

[2] *Looking to Fanmere to help him out of it.*

FAN.[3]

[3] R.

You mustn't judge by appearances——

MAYNE.

No, nor by facts! Nor by what everybody knows! Nor by what I know myself! Nor by what I see with my own eyes! [4]

[4] *Goes up* C.

FAN.[5]

[5] *Going up* R. C. *to Mayne.*

Well, Harry and I were very much impressed by Jo Lacy's manner this afternoon, weren't we, Harry? [6]

[6] *Fan. and Mayne come down* C. *together.*

TAV.

Yes——

MAYNE.

You thought he was innocent?

TAV.

Struck me so, I assure you.

MAYNE.

You thought he and Lady Verona were innocent that morning?

TAV.

Yes.

MAYNE.

Then why have you gone about repeating this in club smoking-rooms, to men like Pyecroft and his set—repeating it as if they were guilty?

TAV.

Eh? well——

MAYNE.

Give me *your* word of honor, when you found them that morning you believed them to be innocent. [*Pause.*] Why don't you speak?

TAV.

Well—I——

MAYNE.

Your sacred word of honor as a gentleman, you believed them to be innocent.

TAV. [*Drawing back.*]

Well, of course that was my impression. I may have been mistaken.

MAYNE.

Ah! [*To* FANMERE.] You see![1]

[1] *Crosses down* R.

FAN.

All the same, my dear Hardolph——[2]

[2] *Goes to Mayne.*

MAYNE.

All the same, I mean to be fooled no longer.

[*Seats himself down to writing-table,*[1] *begins to write hurriedly.*[2]

FAN.

What are you going to do?[3]

MAYNE.

I'm writing to Cattermoul to come and take my instructions, and begin an action.[4]

TAV.

I shouldn't rush it if I were you. [*Pause.*] Can't anything be done?

MAYNE.

Nothing. [*Continues writing.*] Good-day.[5]

FAN.

I'll come in again to-night or to-morrow. I hope you'll think better of it. [MAYNE *shakes his head.*] Where is Vee?

MAYNE.

I don't know.[6]

FAN.

Come along, Harry——

[*Pausing at door—*(*shrugs his shoulders*) *goes off quickly.*

TAV.

Well, tata for the present, Hardolph.[7] I shouldn't rush it, you know! Hope it will turn out all right. Anything I can do—anything in this world—only too happy—Tata!

[*Exit at door after* FANMERE. MAYNE[8] *has finished letter, and addressed it.*

[1] R.

[2] *Fan. and Tav. exchange looks.*

[3] *Tav. comes to* C.

[4] *Fan. beckons to Tav. Tav. comes* R. C.

[5] *Tav. nudges Fan. to say something.*

[6] *Mayne says his last line short and snappy as if he intended it as a snub to Fan. and for the latter to go away.*

[7] *Moving up while speaking.*

[8] *Rises and crosses to* L. *with it. Presses electric button below fireplace and then reads letter and places it on envelope and seals it.*

Enter KNAPMAN.[0]

[0] *Bell rings off R.*

MAYNE.[1]

[1] *At fire.*

You will take this letter to Mr. Cattermoul in Bedford Row, and wait for an answer.

KNAP.

Yes, sir. [*Takes letter, goes towards door, stops.*] I wish to say, sir, that all through this painful catastrophe, Mrs. Knapman and I have acted——

MAYNE. [*Impatiently.*]

Yes, yes——

KNAP.

Have acted in accordance with your happiness, sir, and the best interests of all the parties concerned.

MAYNE.

Yes, yes; take that letter.

[KNAPMAN *goes to door.* MAYNE *stands a moment in indecision—then calls.*

MAYNE.

Knapman![2]

[2] *Knapman comes down C. with letter.*

MAYNE.

Give me that letter. I have omitted something. [*Taking letter from* KNAPMAN.[3] KNAPMAN *is going.*] Knapman, is her ladyship still in her room?

[3] *Crosses to desk R.*

KNAP.[4]

[4] *Goes up R.*

No, sir. Her ladyship went out about an hour ago. Mrs. Knapman happened to observe that her ladyship called a hansom off the rank.

[*Exit* KNAPMAN.[5] MAYNE *stands letter in hand tortured with indecision for a moment or two.*

[5] *At door.*

FOOTMAN *enters through curtains at back.*[6]

[6] *Comes R. C*

FOOTMAN.

Mr. Pyecroft is in the drawing-room, sir.

MAYNE.

Show him in here.

FOOTMAN.[0]

[0] *Goes to* L. *side of curtains.*

Will you step this way, sir?

PYECROFT *enters through curtains at back,* FOOTMAN *announces* "Mr. Pyecroft."
[*Exit* FOOTMAN.[1]]

[1] *Through curtains.*

PYECROFT.[2]

[2] *Coming down* R. C.

My dear Hardolph—[*shaking hands*] forgive my intruding. I hope all domestic—ripples shall I call them—have subsided?

MAYNE.[3]

[3] R. C.

No.[4]

[4] *Beating the letter in his hand against the other hand.*

PYE.

You surely haven't taken any serious notice of my foolish babble?

MAYNE.

Yes. I've made further inquiries; your foolish babble as you call it has been confirmed, fully confirmed.

PYE.

I'm sorry.

MAYNE.

So I have no option but to carry the thing through to the end.

PYE.

Is that necessary?

MAYNE.

You don't expect me to sit down calmly and see my honor dragged through the dirt? Is that what you advise?

PYE.

I never advise in these affairs. I am a mere spectator of our very imperfect system of monogamy; I look on with no prejudices, no principles, and I am thankful to say, no honor.

MAYNE.

No honor?

PYE.

None whatever. I have never missed it or wanted it. And the only difference between me and my neighbors is, that while we all act towards womenkind [0] in exactly the same way, and are equally plagued by them, I spare myself the trouble of having to look after my honor, in addition to having to look after the lady who is deceiving me. And I also spare my friends a deal of windy talk about that same honor, which I am lucky enough not to possess.

[0] *Mayne sits* R. *at desk.*

MAYNE.[1]

Pyecroft, this is monstrous![2] But you'd see things differently if you were married![3]

[1] *Rises.*

[2] *Crosses to* C.

[3] *Goes* L. C.

PYE.[4]

Even in that last extremity I question whether my judgment would be warped. My dear Hardolph, just look calmly for a moment at this great matrimonial hurlyburly. What a mess poor crazy old Dame Nature has made of the whole business! What infinity of dodging and deceit and trickery she forces upon us to work her silly unworkable scheme! And how we all try to cover her mistakes and our weakness with words, words, words, and shams, shams, shams! What does the wise man do? A week ago, before you heard my silly club chatter, you were happy——

[4] *Going* C.

MAYNE.

I was in a fool's paradise. Thank God I'm out of it![1]

[1] *Sits in chair below fire* L.

PYE.[2]

[2] *Standing* L. C.

Why? What will you do? Find another fool's paradise? With another Eve? Will you be any more secure in that? Yes, till some kind chance opens your eyes again! And then? Then you'll rave again about "wounded honor," and "vindicating honor" and "dragging your honor in the dust" and all that stale claptrap. My dear Hardolph, why not, why not, put yourself outside of it for a moment and see the absurdity of the whole affair? Treat it as a comedy, and a comedy it becomes! Treat it as a tragedy, and by God, it is a tragedy; and you break your heart! Come, come, my dear Hardolph, shut your eyes and join the laughers![3]

[3] *Goes to Mayne and taps him on the shoulder.*

MAYNE.

[4] *Rises.*

No![4] Pyecroft, you don't know what this means to me, or you wouldn't talk like this. It's an insult to my manhood![5]

[5] *Going to* C.

PYE.

Forgive me, I only wished to ease the situation for you. What have you there?[6]

[6] *Pointing to the letter in his hand.*

MAYNE.

A letter to my lawyer, asking him to come here and take my instructions.

PYE.

Suppose——

MAYNE.

What?

[7] C.

PYE.[7]

Suppose Lacy wished to go abroad——

MAYNE.

Damn him![0]

PYE.

Certainly. Damn him. And then send him out of England for some years?

MAYNE.

No!

PYE.

Shall I sound him, and try to arrange?

MAYNE.

No![1]

PYE.

At any rate let the matter rest for a day or two.

MAYNE.

No!

PYE.

Suppose after a week or two you elect to take the comedy view of the situation: [MAYNE *shakes his head*] or suppose the cruellest thing of all—suppose when you've dragged your honor and her honor through the divorce court, suppose you find you love her after all——

MAYNE *makes a desperate gesture and sits down,*[2] *covering his face with his hands.* LADY VERONA *enters.*[3]

PYE.

How d'ye do, Lady Vee?

LADY V.

How d'ye do?[4]

[0] *Moves to down* R.

[1] *Pyecroft shrugs his shoulders.*

[2] *By desk.*

[3] *Through curtains.*

[4] *Shaking hands. She crosses over to fireplace, Mayne watching her, puts her feet on fender and warms them, standing with her back to them. Pyecroft is waiting to take his leave.*

PYE.[1]

Good-bye, my dear Hardolph.

MAYNE. [*To him, in a low voice.*]

No—come back in a little while when I've spoken to her.

PYE.

Au revoir,[2] I shouldn't send that.

[*Pointing to letter in* MAYNE'S *hand. Exit* PYECROFT.[3]

MAYNE.[4]

Have you nothing to say to me?

LADY V.[5]

Good morning.[6]

MAYNE.[7]

I mean to get at the truth of this affair.

LADY V.

Can I help you in any way?

MAYNE.

Please don't trifle with me. This is a letter to Cattermoul.—In less than an hour this matter will be out of my hands.[8]

LADY V.[9]

Hadn't you better wait and see Jo Lacy?

MAYNE.

See him?[10]

LADY V.

He's now on his way here.

[*Taking a book, seating herself quietly*[11] *her back to him and reading it during following scene.*

[1] *Goes down* R. C.

[2] *Looks at Lady V.*

[3] R. *Mayne rises. Lady Verona still stands at fire, her back to Mayne who watches her a moment or two.*

[4] R. C.

[5] *Without turning round.*

[6] *He makes an angry gesture and gets up* C.

[7] *After a pause.*

[8] *Places the letter on small table up* L. C.

[9] *Turns.*

[10] *Lady V. comes* L. C.

[11] C.

MAYNE.

On his way here?

LADY V. [*Looking up from her book.*]

I've just left him. [*Returning to her book.*] Would you like to know what passed between us? [*Slight pause.*]

MAYNE. [*Sternly.*]

If you please.

LADY V. [*Smiling.*]

Well, my dear Hardolph, you must own my position is a very serious one.

MAYNE.

Serious?

LADY V.

Well, isn't it? I've told you the truth, you don't believe me. I would tell you the other thing if I could think of one that would satisfy you. But I can't. So I thought I'd just call and see what I might expect from Jo Lacy—in case——

MAYNE.

In case of what?

LADY V.

Well, it's only common prudence for me to—well—a—make some arrangements for my future——

MAYNE.

Your future?

LADY V.

When you turn me out of doors. So my dear Hardolph, don't be a dog in the manger about me; and

don't say I didn't give you the first chance of retaining my poor services.

[*Reads her book.* MAYNE *walks madly about the room.*[1]

[1] *Comes down* R. C.

MAYNE. [*Looks at her.*]

I suppose Lacy told you he was dying to take you off my hands. [LADY VERONA *looks up from her book, smiles at him, and goes on with her reading.*] Did he?

LADY V. [*Looking up again.*]

I'll tell you a secret. I only said that to make you wild.

MAYNE.

Then it isn't the truth?

LADY V.

I won't say that—as a matter of fact I believe he is—well—if not dying—at least quite willing to take me off your hands. But when I told you so, I wasn't sure of it. I only said it——

MAYNE.

[2] *Rises and stands.*

To make me wild![2]

LADY V.

Yes, and I succeeded, didn't I? [*Laughing at him.*] You remember the morning you left for Scotland! It made you so wild that you actually banged the handle off my bedroom door. By the way, it has never been mended.

MAYNE. [*Beside himself.*]

I daresay not!

[*Seeing her startled look of indignation.*

MAYNE. [*Ashamed.*]

I beg your pardon.

LADY V.

Yes, I think you should.

[*Goes back to her book. He walks about looking furtively at her.*[1]

[1] *Goes up* R. *Then comes* C.

MAYNE. [*At length.*]

Vee, I've no wish to carry this to extremes.

LADY V.

Then, my dear Hardolph, don't go one inch further.

MAYNE.

If it can be avoided. [*She laughs a little laugh over her book.*] You must see I can't let this rest where it is.[2] If you are innocent——

[2] *Lady V. puts her book down* L.

LADY V.

If? If?!!! [*Laughs, rises, comes up to him.*] Do I look very guilty?

MAYNE. *Looks at her very keenly.*]

I don't know. Mrs. Knapman says you told her to hide from me that you were in town that night. Is that true?

LADY V.

I asked her not to mention that I was in town.

MAYNE.

Why?

LADY V.

I've told you that I came on a little private business of Joyce's. Joyce will be here directly, and then you can ask her all about it. If she tells you——

MAYNE.

If she tells me——

LADY V.

You'll know all about it.[3]

[3] *Goes a step to* L.

MAYNE.

All about what? Joyce left before "he" came, didn't she?

LADY V.

I suppose so. I was sound asleep when "he" came.

MAYNE.

But what had Joyce to do with Lacy's coming here—his staying here the night? [*No answer.*] You don't deny that you and Lacy both arrived that night?

LADY V.

No.

MAYNE.

You don't deny that you came to me in Scotland and never said a word about it to me?

LADY V.

[1] *Crosses to* R.

No, No! Oh I deny nothing![1]

MAYNE.

You don't deny you gave instructions to my servants to lie to me—you stooped to that——

LADY V.

Ah, what is that, please? What have I stooped to?

MAYNE.

You have thrown dust in my eyes! You are all of you in a league against me! You and your friends and your servants! My friends! My servants! They come to me with lies so palpable, so thick, they can't swallow them. I see, I feel, I know, I've been deceived. I, good heavens, my servants pity me! I see it in their faces. [*Going to her and losing all self-control.*] I say you have deceived me with this man! If you haven't, satisfy me! Satisfy me, I say, or——

LADY V.

Or what?

MAYNE. [*Getting desperate.*]

Throw yourself on my mercy! Confess! [*Seizing her hands violently*[1] *she looks at him contemptuously.*] Tell me the truth, I say——

[1] *He forces her into chair by desk.*

LADY V.

You're hurting me!

MAYNE.

Confess! I will know the truth.

LADY V. [*Very calm.*]

You're hurting me! I bruise very easily.

MAYNE.

I must know! I will know!

LADY V.

Will you please release me?

[*He releases her.*[2] *She is going out of the room.*[3] *He quickly intercepts her.*

[2] *He goes up C.*

[3] *By moving up R. in front of her.*

MAYNE. [*Imploringly.*]

No, Vee, don't leave me. Don't go! Vee, tell me the worst! I'll try to forgive you! I will forgive you.[4] [*Takes the letter from table and tears it up.*] There! I'll face the worst with you! Vee, I love you! I can't help loving you. We'll go out of the country and live this down. Vee, do you hear, I'll forgive you!

[4] *She crosses to down L.*

LADY V. [*Very calmly and proudly.*]

Thank you. That is quite unnecessary!

Is sweeping by him to curtains, when FOOTMAN *enters*[5] *and announces* "Sir Joseph Lacy."

[5] *At door.*

Enter SIR JOSEPH. *Exit* FOOTMAN.

SIR J.[1]

How d'ye do, my dear Mayne?

[MAYNE *turns angrily from* SIR JOSEPH.[2] SIR JOSEPH *looks inquiringly at* LADY VERONA, *who shrugs her shoulders and makes a little grimace of despair behind* MAYNE'S *back.*

SIR J.

Now, my dear Mayne, let us have a cosy three-cornered chat, and put this awkward little matter right.

MAYNE.

I am surprised at your—your——

SIR J.

My impudence! My infernal impudence? Not at all. Believe me I've come in a spirit of the purest friendship.

MAYNE.

Friendship!

SIR J.

Why not? The last time you and I met we parted the best of friends—and we shall to-day.

MAYNE.

You think so?

SIR J.

I'm sure we shall.

MAYNE.

You forget what has happened.

SIR J.

Nothing.

MAYNE.

Nothing?

[1] *Moves down right.*

[2] *Facing L.*

SIR J.

Nothing.

MAYNE.

Nothing?

SIR J.

Nothing. Lady Verona and I are both here, and we are only to anxious——

MAYNE.

Anxious![1]

[1] *Goes up* C.

SIR J.

Only too anxious to satisfy you.[2] Aren't we, Lady Vee?——

[2] *Crosses to* L. C.

LADY V.[3]

[3] *Down* L.

My dear Jo, I am only too anxious to have nothing further to say or do in the matter.[4]

[4] *Mayne comes down* R. C.

SIR J. [*Uneasily.*]

No—no—[*looking from one to the other*] still, we'd better give him the exact particulars, eh?

LADY V.

I have given him the exact particulars—twenty times at least.

SIR J.

Well then we must give him the exact particulars just once more, eh? [*Coming cordially up to* MAYNE.] Give him just one more chance of making himself quite comfortable about it, eh, Hardolph?

MAYNE. [*Fiercely.*]

I am in no mood to be trifled with.

SIR J. [*Hastily.*]

No—no—I see you're not.[5] Come now, Lady Vee, let us simply tell him the plain facts.

[5] *Goes to Lady V.*

LADY V.

It's perfectly useless. He won't listen——

SIR J.

Oh, I'm sure he will,[1] he'll listen to reason, won't you, Mayne?

[1] *Going back to Mayne.*

MAYNE.

No—a——

LADY V.

Ah——!

MAYNE.

I shall not listen to any cut-and-dried story that may be concocted for the purpose——

LADY V.

Concocted! [*To* SIR J.] There! You see!

MAYNE.

Concocted for the purpose of——

SIR J.

No! No! My dear Hardolph—you shan't listen to any cut-and-dried story, and we won't concoct anything, will we, Lady Vee?

LADY V. [*Wearily.*]

Yes! No! Yes! No! Oh, I don't know. I'm ready to concoct anything.

MAYNE. [*To* SIR J.]

You see![2] But you always were the most impossible——

[2] *Crosses to Lady V.*

LADY V.

I? Impossible! I?[3] You see! Impossible! [*To* MAYNE.] Do you remember the morning you left for Scotland——

[3] *Crosses to* C. *and appeals to Sir J., who is* R. C.

MAYNE.

When you told me that Lacy was dying to take you——

LADY V.

Do you remember the Post Office at Henley?

MAYNE.

The Post Office at Henley has nothing to do with this!

SIR J.

That's just what I was thinking——

LADY V. [*To* MAYNE.]

After your conduct in the Post Office I ought to have left you at once.

MAYNE.

That would have spared me this scandal.

LADY V.

Spare yourself, my dear Hardolph, if you wish to be spared.[1] And if you won't spare yourself, at least have the kindness to spare me. [*She is sweeping off.*[2] SIR J. *goes up and stops her.*]

[1] *Goes up* C.

[2] *Door* R.

SIR J. [*Intercepting her at the door, he takes her arm.*]

No, no, my dear Lady Vee, we can't leave it like this [*very coaxingly.*] Come now, let's give him one last chance.[3] I'm sure he's only waiting to make it up, eh?

[3] *Bringing her down.*

MAYNE.[4] [*Indignantly.*]

[4] *Crosses to* L. C.

Lacy, I think it most unbecoming of you—under the circumstances——

SIR J.[1]

Quite so, my dear fellow—I'd quite forgotten it for the moment! I beg your pardon. Now, my dear Mayne, my dear Lady Vee, just one more try to put it all straight. [MAYNE *shows impatience.*] You won't refuse to listen to me.

[1] *Starting away from Lady V.*

MAYNE. [*Sternly.*]

Go on! [LADY V. *shrugs her shoulders.*[2]

[2] *Goes up* C. *then to fireplace* L.

SIR J.[3]

Well—I had come up from Devonshire that morning—My man, Staddon happened to be laid up with chicken-pox——

[3] *Comes to* C.

MAYNE.

Chicken-pox!

SIR J.

Yes, chicken-pox. Well, when I arrived at Paddington, I found that I had lost my luggage—[MAYNE *makes an impatient exclamation.*] Upon my soul, I had! Well,—I'd lost my luggage—my club happened to be closed for cleaning—and as I strolled along the street outside—[MAYNE *shows impatience.*] Knapman happened to be leaning out of the window——

MAYNE.

I daresay!

SIR J.

"Hallo, Knapman!" I said,—Well, he asked me to come in, and——

MAYNE.

Yes, and Lady Verona *happened* to have come up the same evening, eh?——

SIR J.

Yes, yes! I know it sounds rather silly, but upon my word—it's the truth, Mayne.

MAYNE.

Yes, I've already heard the same story——

SIR J.

We can scarcely call it a story. Let's call it an amusing little episode with a happy ending——

MAYNE.

A happy ending?

SIR J.

Yes, my dear Mayne, either for you or for me. You must decide which.

MAYNE.

You mean then——

[*Looks from one to the other.*

SIR J.

Come, you surely won't break up your home and ruin your life and happiness and hers, because Lady Verona happened to give me a very simple breakfast consisting of two cups of coffee—or three, Lady Verona?

LADY V.

Three.

SIR J.

Three cups of coffee and half a very moderate sized sole. You'll take my word of honor that my presence here was a pure accident, that I entered this house that night your loyal friend, that I left it your loyal friend?

[*Extends his hand to* MAYNE *who refuses to take it, but regards them suspiciously.*

MAYNE.

You two have been talking this over together this afternoon?

SIR J.

Certainly. Why not?

MAYNE.

And you came to the conclusion that the best plan would be for you to come here and give me your word of honor and so put things straight.

SIR J.

Certainly.

[1] *Coming* L. C.

LADY V.[1]

If I were guilty should I have brought him to this house? Would he have come to you in this frank way?

MAYNE.

No—I don't know—yes—of course it's the very thing you would have done—just to throw dust in my eyes—as you all are doing—Fancourt, Tavender—my servants——[2]

[2] *Sir J. moves down* R.

LADY V. [*Shrugs her shoulders.*]

[3] *Returns to fireplace.*

You see?[3]

MAYNE. [*Tortured, turns to* SIR JOSEPH.]

Tell me this, Lacy—how many times have you given your word of honor in affairs of this kind?

SIR J. [*Startled.*]

What? Oh, my dear fellow!

MAYNE.

Answer me, please.

SIR J. [*After a longish pause.*]

I really don't remember. What's that to do with this?

MAYNE.

Tell me this then: suppose—suppose what I think

were true—would you or would you not be ready to give your word of honor to save a woman's reputation? [*Pause.*] Yes or No!

SIR J.

Certainly—I should.

MAYNE.

You would try to save her—even if she were guilty?

SIR J.

Certainly I should play the game as we Englishmen understand it.

MAYNE.

Ah! And you expect me to believe you after that? [1]

[1] *Turns away to* L.

SIR J.

My dear Mayne, you can believe me or not, as you please. In any case we won't quarrel about it.[2]

[2] *Mayne turns to him.*

MAYNE.

We won't quarrel about it?

SIR J.

Why should we? Either you accept my word—in that case we shall part good friends; or you don't accept my word—in that case we shall part very much better friends still.

MAYNE.

Ah, you own it! You own you are only waiting your chance to take her off my hands! Is that so? [*Looking from one to the other.*

SIR J.

You may be sure that whatever responsibility I have incurred as to Lady Verona's future, I shall be ready to take it up at the right moment. Do you

wish me to understand that the right moment has come?

MAYNE. [*Goes to* LADY VERONA *appealingly.*] Have you nothing to say? Won't you give me a chance to hush it up?

LADY V.

My dear Hardolph, certainly, hush it up by all means!

SIR J.

For the last time, Mayne, I give you my word of honor——[1]

[1] *Going to Mayne.*

MAYNE.

Your word of honor! Give me some proof. Some proof, I say.[2]

[2] *Mayne goes up* C.

SIR J. [*Shrugs his shoulders, to* LADY VERONA.] Lady Verona, I trust I have acted throughout as you would wish——

LADY V.

Thank you, yes, Sir Joseph.

SIR J.

Is there anything more I can do?

LADY V.

Nothing, thank you [*looking at* MAYNE], matters are very well as they are.

MAYNE.

Ah![3]

[3] *Coming down* C. *Sir J. goes up* R. *to door.*

SIR J.

I shall remain in town. If anything arises to prove to Mayne that he is mistaken——[4]

[4] *Sir J. comes to table by chair* L. C.

LADY V. [*With great bitterness.*]

Is it worth while to prove to him that he is mistaken?

SIR J.

Rely that I shall make the best fight I can for your reputation. And if I fail, I hope the situation will not be utterly unbearable for you.[1]

MAYNE.[2]

Lacy?[3]

MAYNE.

If I look over this—Pyecroft said you would be willing to leave England——

SIR J.

Certainly. If that will meet the case—and if Lady Verona wishes it.

[*Looking inquiringly to* LADY VERONA.

MAYNE. [*Savagely.*]

If she wishes it! Are you determined to ruin her?

SIR J.

No, I want to save her.[4] I put myself entirely in your hands. I pledge myself to leave England and stay away as long as you please. Will that satisfy you?

MAYNE.

Very well, I'll condone it!

LADY V. [*Indignantly.*]

Condone?! Condone?![5]

SIR J. [*Hushing her down.*][6]

Lady Verona, let it stand at that for the time. I'll leave England to-morrow for—oh, say for life.[7] I shall soon be forgotten—this affair will soon be forgotten, and by-and-by he will understand.—Good-bye!

LADY V.

Sir Joseph, no! An hour ago I begged you to clear

[1] *Goes up to door* R. *opens it, and is going out when Mayne stops him.*

[2] *Goes up to door.*

[3] *Sir Joseph closes door.*

[4] *Walks down a step or two in deliberation and turns.*

[5] *Drops down* L.

[6] *Sir J. goes down* L. C. *to her.*

[7] *Mayne comes down* R. C.

me from this scandal. Thank you for all you have done. Please don't try to clear me any more. I don't wish to be cleared!

MAYNE.

What are you going to do?

LADY V.

I'm going to leave this house with Sir Joseph, if he'll take me.

SIR J. [*Overjoyed.*]

Do you wish that? Do you really wish that?

LADY V.

Yes. I will be perfectly faithful to you as I have been perfectly faithful to him.[1] [*To* MAYNE, *who makes a gesture.*] Yes, perfectly faithful! You can believe that now or no as you please. For the future it will make no difference to me what you believe! You will have no right to question me!

[1] *Sir J. moves* L.

MAYNE. [*Staggered.*]

Vee! I don't know what to believe! I don't know what to do!

LADY V.

Do? Surely only one thing remains for you to do —go to Cattermoul. Isn't that your hat? [*Pointing to hat which has been on table all through—* MAYNE *snatches up hat.*] Yes, go to Cattermoul! And please don't condone anything! I won't be condoned! I don't want to be condoned! I want to be punished as I deserve, for being a faithful wife to you!

[*He comes appealingly to her.*

LADY V. [*Repulsing him indignantly.*]

Oh![2]

[2] *Turns to chair* C.

MAYNE.

Very well, if you will have it so. But remember I loved you so much I was willing to forget and forgive everything for your sake.[1] Remember how I loved you! Think of that—when it's too late!

[*Exit.*[2]

SIR J. [*Watches* MAYNE *off, then goes up very tenderly to* LADY VERONA *and tries to caress her.*]

At last then—since it must be so!

LADY V. [*Repulsing him.*]

No—not now—let me think.

SIR J.

Tell me you know I did my best for you.

LADY V.

Yes, yes, indeed! And it was to be—I couldn't help myself, could I?[3]

SIR J.

Vee. You don't repent——[4]

LADY V.

No, I don't repent—but Jo, everybody will think I really was guilty.

SIR J.

You don't mind now what people think or say, do you?

LADY V.

No—no—only I want everybody to know that there really was nothing between us—that he drove me to this by his suspicions. You'll take care everybody knows that?

[1] *Goes up to door* R.

[2] *He opens door and is about to go out when Sir J. makes a movement towards Lady V. Mayne sees the movement and stops. Sir J. stops. He gives each a searching look and then exits slowly shutting door.*

[3] *Crosses him to* L.

[4] *Gets* C.

SIR J.

Yes—so far as I can——

LADY V.[1] *thoroughly breaks down, sobbing.*

SIR J.

What is it, dearest?

LADY V. [*Sobbing.*]

I can't help it! You told me to be brave and to chaff him—so I did—just for the time—now I feel—— [*Sobbing.*

SIR J.

Come, dearest, there's no need to stay here. The sooner you take the plunge the better——[2]

LADY V. [*Suddenly.*]

Then I haven't taken it? Oh, don't look at me so reproachfully. You have been good. And I will try—I will try—only——

SIR J.

What's the matter? Come, trust yourself to me—you're mine now——

LADY V.

No—no.[3] Jo, listen to this. I am at your mercy—if you force me to go with you, I dare say I shall, but I'm sure in three days I shall begin to hate you ——[*He makes a gesture of despair.*] And after all there is a good deal of excuse for his believing the worst—he was ready to forgive me—Jo, don't look so reproachfully,[4] I know I'm weak and foolish! All my courage has gone—Jo, I can't face it, now it comes to the point.

[*She continues sobbing a little hysterically.*

LADY JOYCE *enters*[5] *goes to* LADY VERONA *and they embrace affectionately, sobbing together.*[6]

[1] *Drops into chair* C.

[2] *He half turns to* R. *then faces her reproachfully.*

[3] *Rises.*

[4] *Sir J. goes up* C. *and then moves* L. C.

[5] *At door.*

[6] *Sir J. moves away from Lady V. to* R.

LADY V.

Joyce!

LADY J.

Vee! [*Petting* LADY VERONA.] There, darling! There! Tell me all about it! Sir Joseph, what are you doing here? what has happened?

SIR J.

Mayne refuses to believe that my presence here that night was an accident. What can we do? your sister has decided to leave Hardolph and place her future in my hands.

LADY J.

No, no, Vee, that isn't so—tell me it isn't?

LADY V.

I'm sure I don't know—I don't know what has happened to me, or what is going to happen—only you may be sure of this dear, whatever people say, I really am innocent.

LADY J. [*Soothing her.*]

Yes—yes—dear—and Hardolph must be made to see it. Where is he?

[MAYNE *comes through curtains.*]

MAYNE.[1]

Vee, forgive me!

LADY V.[2]

Then you didn't go?

MAYNE.

No, I was so mad with doubt and jealousy that—I couldn't help it—I went into the next room on purpose to listen to what you and Lacy would say when you were alone. I heard every word.—Pyecroft was shown in. I made him keep quiet, he heard it

[1] *Coming down* C.

[2] *Crosses Joyce to him.*

too. Vee, I don't know what to say! I was utterly mistaken. I'll make any reparation, any apology. You'll forgive me? I beg ten thousand pardons. Vee——[*he appeals to* LADY V., *who turns away from him.* LADY J. *tries to persuade her to forgive* MAYNE.[1]

[1] *Mayne crosses* R. C., *goes to Sir Joseph.*

MAYNE. [*To* SIR J.]

I own up and—what more can I say?

[*Offers his hand.* SIR J. *takes it, and they shake hands silently.* MAYNE *then goes back to* LADY V.]

Vee, I'm deeply sorry—Vee! Can you forgive me? Can you forget this? [*Offers her his hand.*

LADY V.

Yes—I suppose I must. [*Takes his hand and then with a plaintive little smile.*] But don't do it again.[2] But what about Jo?[3]

[2] *Crosses to Sir J.* R. C.

[3] *Mayne goes up* C. *to curtains.*

SIR J.[4]

[4] R.

Oh! never mind me. I'm getting away from London for a little while and—[*shows he is feeling it deeply.*] Never mind me!

MAYNE. [*Calling through curtains.*]

Pyecroft, will you step here a moment?

Enter PYECROFT *through curtains.*[5]

[5] *Mayne and Pyecroft come down* C. *a little.*

MAYNE.

Pyecroft, will you step here a moment? you know the story is only——

PYE.

A mere figment, my dear Hardolph, like all these stories, a mere figment.[6] Lady Vee, I shall let all our friends know. [*Shakes hands with her.*[7]

[6] *Crosses to Lady V.*

[7] *Crosses* L. C. *to Lady J.*

MAYNE.[1]

You were right, Jo, you said it was only an amusing little episode with a happy ending.[2]

SIR J.[3]

Yes—— [*Joins* MAYNE'S *and* LADY V.'S *hands.*]

An amusing little episode with a happy ending!

QUICK CURTAIN.

[1] *Up* C. *to Sir J. who is up* R.

[2] *Lady V. comes* R. C.

[3] *Coming down* C.

PROPERTY PLOT ACT, I.

Oval table.
Oblong table.
Writing table.
4 arm-chairs (small).
2 single chairs.
Small table.
Large china cabinet (full of china).
Small cabinet.
Medium sized cabinet.
Table (Hall).
Chair "
Ornaments about room.

Pair of trousers.
Pair of slippers.
Bonnet and shawl.
(*On table*). Plates, bread, glasses, Ham bone on dish.
(*In cabinet*). Whiskey in bottle, water jug, glass on tray.
Ready off. Large silver tray. Silver coffee-pot. Hot milk jug. Sugar basin and tongs. Fish knives and forks. Small knives and forks. 2 serviettes. Table cloth. Real sole cooked on silver dish. Toast in rack. Marmalade pot and spoon. Butter dish and butter. Butter knife. Writing materials on desk.
George Morland coloured engraving on scene.

LIGHTS.

House full up.
4 electric sconces on scene (alight).
Lengths off at entrances.
Lights to work up and down at cues.

---

1 Amber Lime on O. P. shelf.
1 Blue " " " "
2 Ambers on P. S. shelf.
2 Blue limes through window.

ACT II.

Large oak cabinet.
Writing-desk.
Small chair.
Small couch.
Club Ignott.
Long oak chest.
Small table.
Medium-sized square table.
Lamp stand with Figure (Bronze) on it.
Revolving book-case.
Low Japanese table.
2 stuffed arm-chairs.
Small arm chair.
Tapers, etc., on desk.
Cigars, cigarettes, ash tray, matches on table R.
Salver and letters and papers for Staddon.
Stag's-head and armour trophy on scene.

ACT III.

Writing-desk
3 small tables
3 arm-chairs } Louis XVI.
1 single chair
Low seat

Dutch cabinet.
China " full of china.
Coal-scuttle.
Ornaments on mantel-shelf duplicated at back for dummy looking-glass.
Bear-rug front of fire.
Writing materials.
Furniture in room at back.

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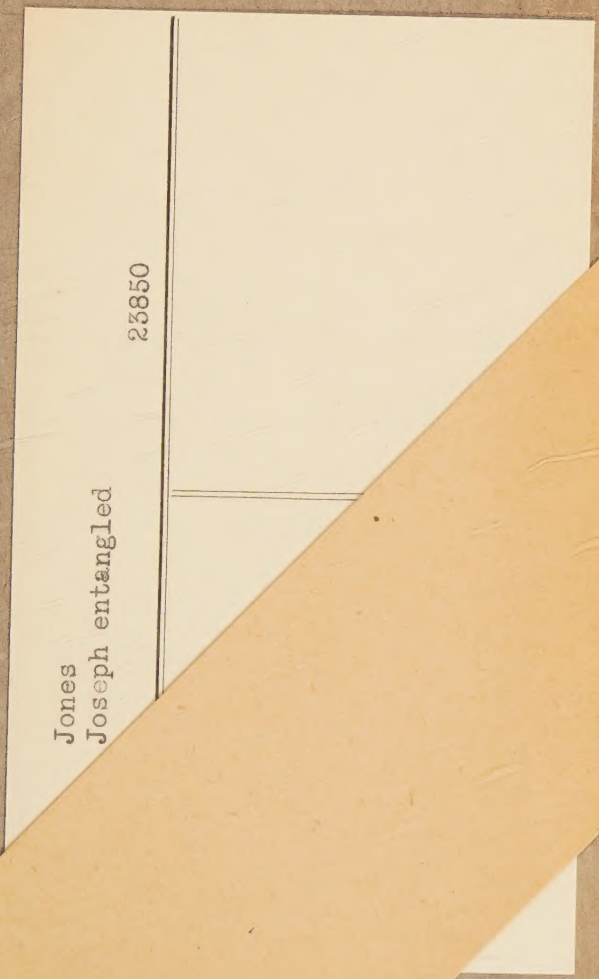

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